

THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT

STARBURST

THE
**WALKING
DEAD**

ALSO:

TOP 50 ZOMBIE MOVIES

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

KILLER KLOWNS

DOCTOR WHO

HORNS

AND MORE!

MOVIES ★ TV ★ GAMING ★ AUDIO ★ COMICS ★ BOOKS

**ISSUE
405**

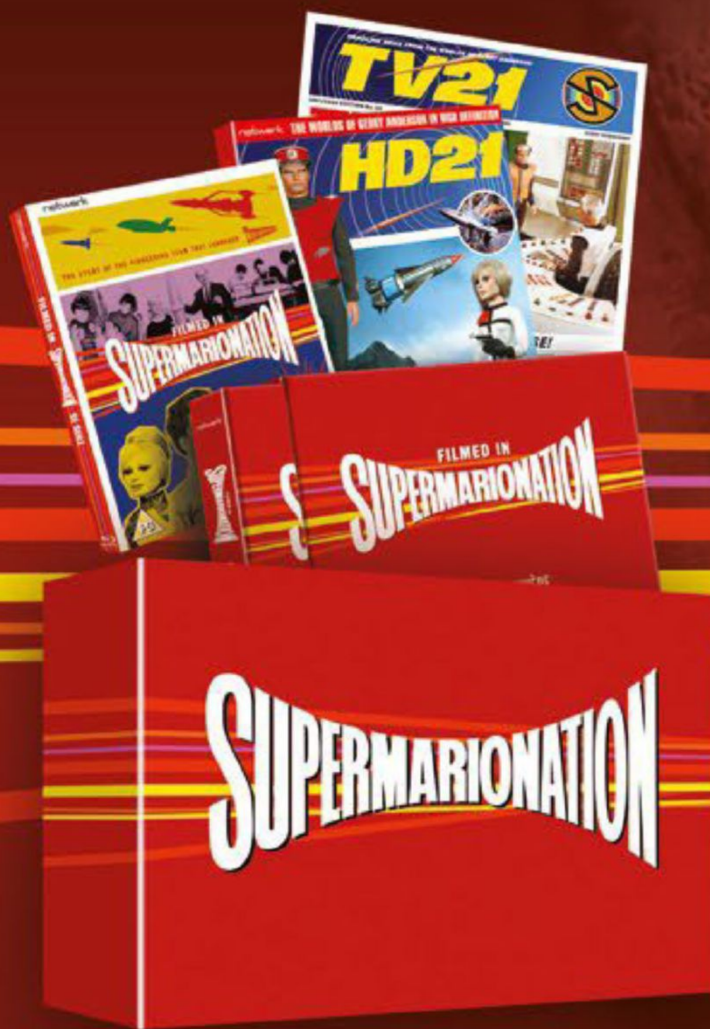
**STARBURST
PUBLISHING**

+



0 5 >

OCTOBER 2014
Printed in the UK
£4.30



FILMED IN SUPERMARIONATION

The definitive documentary

THIS IS SUPERMARIONATION

A presentation of restored episodes with new linking material and a myriad of archive material.

HD21- THE WORLDS OF GERRY ANDERSON IN HIGH DEFINITION

Further adventures in Supermarionationland

FILMED IN SUPERMARIONATION

An updated and vastly expanded edition of Stephen La Rivière's book

TV21

Brand new and exclusive edition number 243

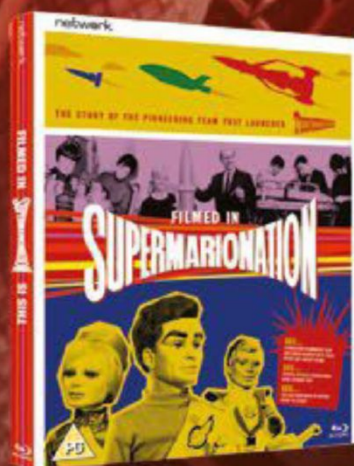
COMMEMORATIVE POSTCARDS

Limited edition available to PRE-ORDER NOW, only from networkonair.com

network

FILMED IN SUPERMARIONATION

THE DEFINITIVE DOCUMENTARY
IN CINEMAS OCTOBER 2014



PRE-ORDER ON BLU-RAY & DVD NOW
from amazon.co.uk

Stay tuned for updates and exclusive previews

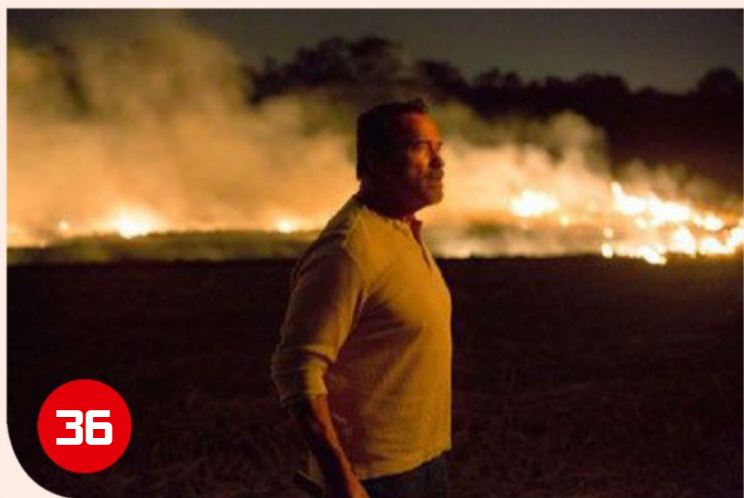


/FilmedinSupermarionation



#FiS

CONTENTS



FEATURES

WALKING TALL 12

Your complete guide to the eagerly awaited fifth season of ratings smash, THE WALKING DEAD.

THE COMIC BOOKS OF THE DEAD 22

Explore the rich history of the living dead long before Robert Kirkman introduced readers to Rick Grimes and his ghoul-battling buddies.

THE Z-LIST 24

The STARBURST team bring you the ultimate guide to 70+ years of zombie cinema, with a countdown of our 50 favourites! How many have you seen?

ALIVE AND KICKING 36

We all know the undead hordes just can't be kept down, so get equipped for the next wave of zombies shambling their way to our screens over the next few years with our comprehensive Preview. iZOMBIE, Z NATION, MAGGIE, DEAD ISLAND, ZOMBEAVERS, and many more!

KING GEORGE 46

GAME OF THRONES author GEORGE R.R. MARTIN discusses his long and varied career in fantasy fiction.

THE DEVIL INSIDE 48

Acclaimed director ALEXANDRE AJA talks about his career in horror cinema, and gives us the lowdown on his next project, the adaptation of JOE HILL's hit novel HORNS, starring DANIEL RADCLIFFE.

THE RINGMASTERS 60

Roll up, roll up! THE CHIODO BROTHERS are coming to town! To celebrate the debut of cult classic KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE on Blu-ray, we catch up with the masterminds behind it.

COURSE AND EFFECTS 68

Veteran FX artist SHAUNE HARRISON invites us into his newly opened ACADEMY OF PROSTHETIC AND MAKE UP.



THINGS TO COME..... 8

BLUE BOX SECTION

OUTSIDE THE BOX..... 40

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO.... 42

BLUE BOX REVIEWS..... 44

GIRL FROM PLANET X . . 52

HORROR OBSCURA.. 55

INDEPENDENTS DAY..75

CINEMA..... 80

DVD & BLU-RAY.... 85

AUDIO..... 94

BOOKS..... 96

COMICS..... 104

GAMES..... 110

EVENT PROFILE . . 122

ORIGINAL FICTION.. 124

TV ZONE..... 126

IT'S ONLY A MOVIE.. 129

REGULARS



CONTENTS

STARBURST

OCTOBER 2014

ISSUE
405

EDITORIAL

Editor

JORDAN "MIKE" ROYCE
jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Editor

KRIS HEYS
kris.veys@starburstmagazine.com

Honorary Editor-in-Chief

DEZ SKINN

Reviews Editor

JULIAN WHITE

Original Fiction Editor

RYLAN CAVELL
rylan.cavell@starburstmagazine.com

Editorial Assistants

JOE ROYCE
MARTIN UNSWORTH
JACK BOTTOMLEY

ART

Collectors Edition Cover Artist

MARK REIHILL
markreihill.com

Art Director

JORDAN "MIKE" ROYCE
jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Art Director

SHAUNA ASKEW
shauna.askew@starburstmagazine.com

PRESS

Press Liaison

PHIL PERRY
phil.perry@starburstmagazine.com

Event Correspondent

ANDREW KEATES
andrew.keates@cabbell.co.uk

THE GREATEST WRITING TEAM IN THE UNIVERSE

Head Writer

PAUL MOUNT
paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com

Lead Writers

VANESSA BERBEN, JACK BOTTOMLEY, MARTYN CONTERIO,
DOMINIC CUTHBERT, KATE FATHERS, ED FORTUNE, JOEL HARLEY,
CHRIS JACKSON, CHRISTIAN JONES, TONY JONES, GRANT KEMPSTER,
JOHN KNOTT, ANDREW MARSHALL, IAIN MCNALLY, KIERON MOORE,
STUART MULRAIN, ROBIN PIERCE, ANDREW POLLARD,
CAROLINE PREECE, LEE PRICE, PAUL RISKE, IAIN ROBERTSON,
CALLUM SHEPARD, JR SOUTHALL, NICK SPACEK, ADAM STARKEY,
ROB TALBOT, PETE TURNER, MARTIN UNSWORTH

Contributors

SOPHIE ATHERTON, DAVID BAGSHAW, JENNIE BAILEY, PHIL BERESFORD,
SIMON BESSON, NICK BLACKSHAW, P.M. BUCHAN, NEIL BUCHANAN,
ABIGAIL CHANDLER, ALISTER DAVISON, SLEENY DOTSON, CARA FIELDER,
ZACHARY FOX, JD GILLAM, ANDY HALL, CHRIS HOLT, ANIMAL JOHNS,
ROBERT KEELING, IAN MAT, KATHERINE MCLAUGHLIN, NEIL MCNALLY,
HAYDEN MEARS, JACKSON NASH, MICHAEL NOBLE, PADDY O'HARE,
CLEAVER PATTERSON, LUKE RILEY, LAURA ROBINSON, WHITNEY SCOTT-BAIN,
DANIEL SEDDON, STEVEN SCHAPANSKY, KAL SHANAHAN, JON TOWLSON,
SCOTT VARNHAM, DAVID WHALLEY, CHAD WHITAKER, ZACK THE ZOMBABY

ONLINE

Editor

KRIS HEYS
kris.veys@starburstmagazine.com

Assistant Editor

ANDREW POLLARD
andrew.pollard@starburstmagazine.com

Webmaster

JIM BOON
jim@starburstmagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Make sure you don't miss an issue of
STARBURST by taking advantage of our
great subscription offers at
www.starburstmagazine.com.

For all subscription enquiries please
contact:
subscriptions@starburstmagazine.com

ADVERTISING

Advertising Director

ANDREW KEATES
020 3603 4950
andrew.keates@cabbell.co.uk

REVIEW MATERIALS

Please send all review materials to:
STARBURST MAGAZINE
PO BOX 4508
MANCHESTER
M61 0GY

LIZARD

STARBURST HQ is grateful for the protection
of our faithful Lizard TETSUO. A rebel survivor
from the Icke Reptilian Wars of the '80s,
TETSUO remains vigilant to this day, upholding
his promise to protect all of mankind from
the ever present threat of reptilian evil.

Starburst Magazine is published monthly by Starburst Publishing Ltd. Nothing in this magazine can be reproduced in whole or in part without the written permission of the publisher. Whilst every effort is made to ensure all information in the magazine is correct, prices and details may be subject to change. All photographic material is copyright to the relevant owner and appears with their kind permission. Visuals are used in a reviews context and no copyright infringement is intended. All rights reserved.

Starburst is printed in the UK by PENSORD PRESS LTD, Tram Road,
Pontllanfraith, Blackwood NP12 2YA.

Distributed by MARKETFORCE, Blue Pin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU.
Tel: 020 3148 3300 - Fax: 020 3148 8105 - Web: marketforce.co.uk

DEADITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 405. With **The Walking Dead** about to return to our screens it's the perfect excuse to revisit the zombie genre.

A genre we have been covering since the infamous Issue 48, when STARBURST threw caution to the wind and became the first UK mag to devote the entire issue to these fiendish fellas. We are dealing with zombies in the usual STARBURST way, and looking at the genre across the years, and mediums, but we are sure you will be blown away by our definitive chart of the top 50 zombie movies of all time. Find out if your

fave zombie movies make the top ten! I am also over the moon this month as we have finally managed to grab some quality time with three heroes of mine – the Chiodo Brothers. These guys made just about my favourite sci-fi B movie of all time – **Killer Klowns from Outer Space**. It's a pleasure to have them on board for this issue as they spill the beans on their future plans. We also catch up with FX guru Shauna Harrison in the first of a two-part interview with one of the stars of the industry. All this and all of your regular favourites. It's Zombietastic!

On a slightly sadder note this is the issue where we say goodbye (for the time being) to my mate and fellow STARBURST Editor, Kris Heys.

Over the years the STARBURST family has had the benefit of some amazing talent like Dez Skinn, John Brosnan, Tis Vahimagi, Paul Mount, and many more. Kris Heys is right up there with the best of them, and has fought tooth and nail to get this mag back to its glory days. The mag is doing better than ever and in no small way Kris has made a lot of that happen. He is taking some time away after this mammoth stint, and I hope you join me in wishing him all the best. Kris was there for STARBURST at a critical time in its long history, and thanks to him you will be reading the mag for many years to come. He won't be a stranger, and I am going to try to lure him back at the first opportunity!

Keep watching the weird and wonderful,


Jordan Royce
EDITOR



FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
or email: letters@starburstmagazine.com

SINEMA

Writing to say that I loved Sin City 2, each character in the movie had their own story to tell which slotted together to form a brilliant jigsaw of a tale. I especially loved the evil Senator, played by Powers Booth, what a complete son

of a bitch! I was spellbound by this nasty piece of work, looking forward to Sin City 3, so keep them coming Frank!

And yes, I remember Mr. Miller's great work on *Daredevil*, truly groundbreaking stuff.
Peter Thomson, HIGH WYCOMBE

STARBURST
PUBLISHING

STARBURST PUBLISHING
2nd Floor, 60 Portland Street,
Manchester. M1 4QT

STAR

What a lovely entertaining evening it was at Fab Café for the Evening of Horror and Chat with Laurence R. Harvey. The selection of short films by new filmmakers Jill Sixx Gevargizian and Jerry Pyle – a mixture of thriller and whiff – while only five minutes long each, were straight to the point and kept you very entertained. The Q&A with Jill, Jerry and Laurence, interviewed by Martin Unsworth of STARBURST, was very interesting. It was great to hear Jill and Jerry tell the tales of how they fund and create these short films and their time in the movie-making business, and they seemed to enjoy being there. Mr Laurence

Harvey seemed so relaxed and told many a story of his time in *The Human Centipede 2*, plus revealing his earlier TV and movie life, plenty of which I didn't know about, was very interesting.

I hope you and Fab Café plan to put more of these kinds of nights on; it was nice to have something like this locally to me.

Thank you STARBURST and Fab Café!

Lou Hughson, WIGAN

We all had a blast too! You are in luck... STARBURST plans to hold lots more of these type of events, so watch this space and keep checking our website.

LETTER

I loved the *Sin City: Dame To Kill For* coverage, it really got me stoked for the film, which I still find hard to believe bombed as much as it did. Even if we waited 10 years!!! I mean there was swords, shotguns, beautiful ladies, motorcycles and steaming visuals, how can that fail?! Oh wait a second, a talking raccoon, a dancing tree, a quackers credits scene, an awesome mix tape, a green assassin and a WWE wrestler turned literal-speaking maniac. Ok, fair dues, as competition goes, that was pretty tough to tackle, even when armed with a Marv!

Andrew, YORK

You're not the only ones who've taken a trip to Basin City, take a look at our review on page 83, and have a read of It's Only a Movie on page 129 for our Editor's views on the film.

A COVER TO KILL FOR

Picking up the latest issue of your magazine, I was rather shocked to find you have resorted to a rude cover, how disappointing! It's a good job the content didn't reflect the initial impression.

Mark, via email

Wow! What an amazing cover the last issue had! Very striking and bold, a couple of points were very eye catching! Well done STARBURST. More of the same please!

Jenny, via email

We are sorry you felt that way initially Mark, but you will be pleased to see that this

month we have a male on the cover with PLENTY of flesh on display too.

WHORUMPH

I'm writing to you due to a decision I made recently, to stop reading your magazine. The reason for this needs a little explanation, so bear with me? Thank-you.

I've kept my eye on STARBURST for many years, in its original incarnation, and since its revival. In its current form, it's had a variety in its quality, with lots of good stuff (JR Southall's pieces on *Doctor Who* have been most insightful) but also with articles that seemed to hit an odd tone of "Ah, noone reads us anyway, so here's where we work out our own bugbears," (such as the movie columns you used to end each issue with). But the articles that best fit this description (and why I am giving up) are Paul Mount's ones on *Doctor Who*. His issues with the show led to a blanket contempt for its last series, blind to what good was undoubtedly there, and his judgements of its characters are so staggeringly short-sighted as to border on the autistic.

You think I'm exaggerating? Okay then. The best example was the piece on Amy Pond. After filling a page and a half just by reciting the plot of series six (as if certain that all that is required to trigger righteous fury at the show is to describe it), Paul gives his opinion of Amy in *The Eleventh Hour*. His verdict? "Whiny and needy." Quite simply, anyone who can watch such a marvellously sympathetic

and complex bit of character-building and just come away with "whiny and needy" is either genuinely subnormal... or is operating from such a position of bitterness and resentment that it's a direct insult to either assume the reader is on the same wavelength, or stupid enough to buy into it. The article did manage a good point at one stage (about how difficult it is to sustain as intense an emotional thread as Amy and Rory looking for their child in a show like *Doctor Who*), but it was surrounded by more of the same blinkered crap.

His next article is apparently on Clara. And when I spotted the new STARBURST in WH Smiths, the only thought that came to me was not even to just look through the rest of the magazine, but "Oh, what the fuck will that idiot come out with now." So I'm packing it in. I hope the other sections of your magazine continue to be a success.

This is a strong email and I'm not expecting any responses, but I should specify that if I get any I'll not read them.

Timothy Williams

Paul says: "I'm sorry that my opinion of a fictional character in a TV show has distressed you. Opinions similar to your own are probably available in more anodyne genre magazines."

SUBJECT: SUBSCRIBERLY

Dear mr, My name is Vasfi. I am working as a camera technician in a firm. I am wishing my knowledges about video and movie maker subjects. I am enthusiast of the video, cinema and movie subject investigations. So much I want to meet realist of the video and camera subjects. I want to subscriber to your magazine STARBURST - For this I want some magazines or back issues as sample(s) from STARBURST. In future I will be subscriber to your magazines. I am waiting your reply in a soon.

Vasfi, TURKEY

Sorry bub! The only free magazines this month are going to our friend Lou (above left). We suggest checking out our digital version, it's only 7 Turkish Liras an issue! Oh... we've just realised that you aren't gonna be reading this, as you will be sat by your door waiting for your freebies. What to do...

EXPENDABULLIES ASSEMBLE

Re: Expendabullies idea in issue #404's letters page, I've been



thinking about this at work... not sure if this one counts as he isn't a 'movie star' but I think he sure fits into the same

boat... WOLF! Ya know, from '90s Gladiators! I bet he's cheap too!

Sandra, via email

Are these to go up against *The Expendables*? If so, I think it would be really cool to carry on the tradition of an action hero playing 2 roles in a film, so how about Dolph Lundgren playing a bully too, like Ivan Drago!

Neil, via email

Al Leong, 'nuff said.

Owen, via email

How about Robert Patrick as an Expendabully? It would be nice to see him battle Schwarzenegger again!

Col, via email

Keep 'em coming action fans!

twitter

@STARBURST_MAG

"Karl Urban Discusses Possible DREDD Follow-Up." You said...

@scootmagapril Yes, please!

@Clinteriffic I remember Alex Garland saying that Dredd was a starting point, and that Necropolis was the main plan

@iburndave having dredd without death is like batman without joker :/

@Clinteriffic Who could even play Death tho? Nobody is that emaciated!

@iburndave Serkis ;)

@Original_Martin The movie definitely deserves sequels. One of the best comic book adaptations. Everything Hollywood wouldn't do with Dredd

@KevKevRyan @actordougjones would be perfect for Judge Death.

@Clinteriffic Spot on Kev, was trying to remember his name. Incredible talent ;)

@iburndave time to start a campaign :P



THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



DC

Whereas the last few months have seen Marvel Studios threaten to take over TTC completely, this issue it's time for DC to have some time in the spotlight. In the biggest DC-related news of the month, **Hercules'** Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson has been confirmed as playing the villainous Black Adam (pictured above) in New Line's **Shazam**. It was previously reported that Johnson had the choice to play either Shazam or Black Adam, with him deciding to settle on the villain of the piece and a role he's been linked to for years. From what we've heard so far, it could be that some of the more antihero elements of Black Adam may be played up when Johnson takes to the screen. New Line, under the Warner Brothers umbrella, will be producing the movie, although no details are known in terms of cast, crew, director, locations or literally anything other than 'former WWE Champion to grapple with Shazam!' It is expected, however, that **Shazam** will be released in the second half of 2016. Of course, **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice** is Warner Brothers' other 2016 release, with that hitting screens on March 25th. No real news has dropped on that particular film since we last spoke, although there is a small rumour that **Monsters** star Scoot McNairy's mystery role in the **Man of Steel** follow-up will actually be Jimmy Olsen. Even more interestingly, it's speculated that Olsen is legless! No, the famed photographer hasn't gone off the rails and had one too many Newcastle Brown Ales, instead the rumour mill

suggests that Olsen lost both of his legs during the destruction of Metropolis caused by Superman and Zod's battle at the climax of **Man of Steel**. To further add to this story, McNairy has been spotted on set in a getup that suggests that *something* will be being done to his lower legs in post-production. So for those who thought that the carnage of **Man of Steel's** finale was against the ideology of the Big, Blue Boy Scout, you could very well be adding Jimmy losing his limbs to your Supes shit-list. Wrapping big screen matters up, Warner Bros this month registered the online domain names ShazamMovie.com, WonderWomanTheMovie.com, AquamanMovie.com and JusticeLeagueFilm.com. So yeah, those are all going to be happening at some point over the next few years.

Whereas Superman will return in **Batman v Superman** and **Justice League**, it appears that we could be seeing cousin Kara Zor-El, aka Supergirl, heading to the small screen. DC Entertainment has started to pitch the idea to several networks, with Michael Green attached to write and produce. Green's previous writing credits include **Smallville**, **Heroes** and the Ryan Reynolds-starring **Green Lantern** (but let's not hold that against him). Even more key, Green actually penned the first twelve issues of Supergirl's New 52 relaunch. Interestingly, The CW, previous home of **Smallville**, current home of **Arrow**, and future home of **The Flash**, has already passed on this Supergirl-based show. Given how a **Man of Steel** prequel comic confirmed Supergirl's existence in the DCCU, this could serve as a chance to tie one of DC's television properties to its cinematic realm. Expect to be hearing more on this over the next few months.

Whilst Supergirl is currently being hawked around certain networks, **The Flash** is gearing up for its long-anticipated debut. This month saw the show's cast get expanded, with two further villains being introduced into the mix. First up, the always enjoyable Clancy Brown (**Highlander**) was added as General Wade Eiling, a DC character with ties to Amanda Waller and the Suicide Squad and who operates as both a friend and foe to certain superheroes. Whether The General crosses paths with Waller or not remains to be seen, but **The Flash** will see him on the hunt for Kelly Frye's Plastique in the hope of using her as a human weapon. Another recent acquisition for the show is **Prison Break's** Dominic Purcell, who will be playing Mick Rory, aka Heat Wave. In the comics, the original version of the character saw him have no superpowers to speak of, just a big ol' flamethrower. When things got rejigged with the whole New 52 concept, Heat Wave was changed to a pyrotechnic being. We're not sure which route the show will take with the character, although it's already been confirmed that he will be teaming up with Purcell's **Prison Break** co-star Wentworth Miller's Captain Cold in the show's tenth episode. Just as Heat Wave and Captain Cold will be teaming up, producer Andrew Kreisberg has also confirmed that **Arrow's** Clock King, played by yet another Prison Break alumni Robert Knepper, will appear in the Scarlet Speedster-centric show at a later date in a team-up with an unknown villain. **The Flash** will debut Stateside October 7th on The CW, with the show to air on Sky1 at a still to be confirmed date.

As Grant Gustin's Barry Allen is getting ready for his big bow, Stephen Amell's Oliver Queen is gearing up for his third season. Love is in the air for our Emerald Archer, and it seems that we'll get to see the relationship between Ollie and Felicity (Emily Bett Rickards) finally get taken to another level. As all good genre fans know, though, love is never easy for a hero and The Arrow is no exception. DC's Cupid will appear in the show, played by **Supernatural's** Amy Gumenick, and take aim

at **Arrow**'s titular hood-wearing hero. In the comic book world, Carrie Cutter, aka Cupid, is a villainess who becomes obsessed with Green Arrow after an experimental procedure leaves her bordering on insanity. The character was actually created by **Arrow**'s Andrew Kreisberg back in 2009. And just as Oliver will be getting some attention from elsewhere, the show has also cast **Glee**'s Nolan Funk as an ex-boyfriend of Felicity's. Whether he appears in the modern-day or just in flashbacks is unknown, although he will be portrayed as a hacker who Miss Smoak met during her days studying at MIT. On the darker side of the show, **TRON: Legacy**'s Matt Ward has been added to the show as Simon Locroix, better known as the deadly Komodo. A fairly new arrival in the comic book world, Komodo is somebody who has nothing, ends up working for Oliver Queen's father, then goes all kinds of dark and brutal. The character will debut in episode two of the new season, although executive producer Marc Guggenheim revealed that Komodo will be part of a season-long story arc. If the prospect of Komodo debuting wasn't exciting enough for you, the biggest **Arrow** news of the month is that the show has finally cast its Ra's al Ghul. Playing The Demon's Head will be 42-year-old Matthew Nable, best known for his appearance in 2013's **Riddick**. Before the announcement was made, former Ra's Liam Neeson had suggested he'd be more than open to returning to a role he played in Christopher Nolan's **Dark Knight** world. Regardless, Nable has nabbed the role of the famed Batman villain. A character who has so many levels and interesting viewpoints to him, Ra's al Ghul is somebody that we cannot wait to see getting his hands involved in the universe that **Arrow** has established. With that role cast, it was also announced that **The Wolverine**'s Rila Fukushima will replace **Sin City**'s Devon Aoki as the show's Katana due to scheduling conflicts. **Arrow** returns to The CW on October 8th, with a UK debut not far behind.

Finally on the DC front, NBC's **Constantine** has cast the relatively unknown Michael James Shaw as voodoo-empowered necromancer Papa Midnite, a role played by Djimon Hounsou in 2005's failed Keanu Reeves-starrer. The show's pilot, directed by Neil Marshall (**The Descent**), will premiere in the US on October 24th and Channel 5 have already picked up the UK screening rights. AP

POWERS

The long-in-development TV adaptation of Brian Michael Bendis' acclaimed comic book has seen some interesting additions this month. Taking over from the previously cast Jason Patrick in the lead role of Christian Walker, a homicide detective assigned to investigate cases where people have been killed as a result of superpowers, will be **District 9**'s Sharlto Copley. Playing his partner, Deena Pilgrim, is newcomer Susan Heyward, while the ubiquitous Michelle Forbes will now star as Retro Girl, a superhero whose murder forms the series' first primary arc. The always-impressive Eddie Izzard has also been announced as playing the 'big bad' of the series, Wolfe. **Powers** started life at Image Comics back in 2004 before moving over to Marvel's Icon imprint. This latest version of the property will be exclusive to the Sony Playstation Network as their first foray into the ever-growing world of original streaming content. Look for it to make its debut this December. AP

BLACK MIRROR

Cynics of the nation rejoice! A feature length Christmas Special of **Black Mirror** (comedic hatermonger Charlie Brooker's series of quasi-sci-fi satirical one-shots), has been announced. Featuring a trio of intertwining tales, Brooker has described the film as a mix of a Christmas ghost story and Amicus' horror compendiums, while Channel 4's Head of Comedy Phil Clarke described it as "satirical, comic, disturbing, and thought provoking. Not to be missed."

Although no plot details have been released, all six standalone episodes of the two seasons were bound by the concept of treating technological development as an addictive drug, one which society's ever-increasing dependence on was satiated at the expense of our humanity, so we can likely expect more of the same. Except, y'know, Christmassy. AM

THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO

Though news of most reboots and remakes leave Team TTC cold, there are some properties that even the most jaded amongst us have to admit could definitely benefit from a contemporary makeover. And "Believe it or not..." we think **The Greatest American Hero** is one such idea. Fresh from their sterling work reviving another defunct '80s property in the form of **21 Jump Street** (and miraculously making a movie about LEGO bricks something that people actually gave a shit about), writer/director duo Phil Lord & Chris Miller have inherited TV legend Steven J. Cannell's 1981 TV show and will adapt it for a new generation. For those new to it, or for those who have long-forgotten about it, the story followed the adventures of Ralph Hinkley (the generously coiffured William Katt), a mild-mannered teacher who comes into the possession of an alien super suit which, once donned, gives him a multitude of special powers including, but not limited to, flight, X-Ray vision, speed, increased strength and E.S.P. Only thing is, he lost the instructions before he could master any of them, opening the doors for much comedy, mostly involving him flying face-first into solid objects. **The Greatest American Hero** has only been greenlit to pilot stage at this moment, but seeing as everything Lord & Miller touch right now turns to gold, we'd wager we'll be seeing this go to series sometime next year.

And staying on the subject of unlikely reboots, raise your hands if you're old enough to remember **CHiPs**! That's right, the cult motorcycle cop serial that ran from 1977 – 1983 is revving up its engine anew for a revival courtesy of Warner Bros and former TV prankster Dax Shepard, who will write, direct and star. [Are we being Punk'd here? It's hard to tell. – Ed]

THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY - PART 1



Katniss Everdeen's back! (And considering how thousands of creeps got to see Jennifer Lawrence's 'front' in hacked private photos this month, it's hardly surprising she's playing coy here.)



We're still awaiting an official UK release date for the bold anthology sequel, but we do now have some cool new promo art to stare at. Can't help wondering where that baby from the first film's poster has disappeared to though. This fella look a bit suss to you?

SHUTTER ISLAND

Martin Scorsese's 2010 film is the latest horror property to be adapted for the small screen. Tentatively titled **Ashecliffe** after the hospital that's so heavily featured in the story, the show's pilot episode will be penned by Dennis Lehane, author of the original novel on which the film was based. Even more interesting, Scorsese himself is currently in talks to direct here too. The series will take place before the events of the 2010 movie, focusing on the central hospital and the misdemeanors carried out by its founders.

In similar news, Scorsese peer Steven Spielberg is set to develop a TV series based on his 2002 sci-fi flick, **Minority Report**. Max Borenstein, writer of this year's monster hit **Godzilla**, will handle script duties. Expect regular updates on both projects over the coming months. ^{AP}

ACME

Someone shut Porky Pig up, for that's not all folks, not by a long shot! Seems a brand new live-action/animated hybrid outing for the zany, crazy world of **Looney Tunes** is heading to cinemas. Plot details on the new film, which takes its title from the fictional company seen in many a 'toon, are rather light at present, but there are a few whiffs of information to be had: famed funnyman Steve Carrell has been announced as the film's lead, while **X-Men: First Class** scribes Ashley Miller & Zack Stentz are on scripting duties, (next up for the duo, the **Power Rangers** reboot). Steve Carrell will clearly be in his

element here (see **Get Smart** and **Anchorman** for his madcap capabilities), especially if his **Crazy, Stupid, Love** co-directors Glenn Ficarra & John Requa come along for the ride (early word suggests they're close to landing the gig). **Acme** may have been in development since 2010, and last year's **Space Jam** sequel might have been a false start, but it seems like those Looney Tunes are really back in action. I say boy! ^{JB}

CHILDHOOD'S END

No longer content just peddling genre reruns, Syfy has been churning out an impressive haul of original programming over the last few years, including **Helix**, **Defiance** and **Dominion**. The broadcaster has now also given an adaptation of Arthur C. Clarke's 1953 novel **Childhood's End** the greenlight.

Produced by Oscar winner Akiva Goldsman (suffice to say it wasn't his work on **Batman & Robin** that landed him the gold man) and the prolific Mike DeLuca (**Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance**), the series will focus on a breed of aliens dubbed the Overlords who invade and rule over Earth peacefully, creating a quasi-paradise in the place of culture and identity. Nick Hurran (**Doctor Who**) will be directing, with **Life on Mars**' Matthew Graham on screenplay duties. ^{DC}

THE TICK

Patrick Warburton, now synonymous with providing the dulcet tones of **Family Guy**'s Joe Swanson, previously starred in 2001's criminally short-lived, live-action comic book adaptation, **The Tick**. Now comes word that the show is being lined up for a surprise return, complete with Warburton starring, courtesy of streaming service Amazon Prime. Spoon! Original creator Ben Edlund is also on board to write and produce the pilot, which will go to series if it proves popular with Prime customers.

The previous series only managed nine-episodes before its untimely cancellation; but more successful was the animated series that preceded it, running 36 episodes during 1994 and 1996. Let's hope this new show enjoys the same level of success as the latter, because the more streaming services continue to see the benefits of resurrecting cancelled shows with cult status, we might one day be reporting on the return of **Freaks and Geeks**, **Angel**, **Twin Peaks** and/or **Firefly**! (Hey, we can dream.) ^{AP}

ANT-MAN



Behold! The exciting first official still from Marvel Studios' 2015 Phase 3 opener!!! Okay, we admit it - as far as teaser pics go, this makes for one of the duller we've ever seen, so we'll instead use this space to update you on the film's original director, Edgar Wright, whose sudden departure from the project has been well documented. What hasn't been widely covered however, is the confirmation that Wright is now able to move forward on a brand new secret collaboration with his ol' pal and leading man, Simon Pegg. Even better, the movie, which unsurprisingly remains completely under wraps at the time of writing, will launch a brand new trilogy for the pair! As always, **STARBURST** will keep you updated as more information becomes available. (Sorry Marvel, but there's not much we can say about Paul Rudd in a scruffy hoody.)



Finally, it's the first image for **The Last Witch Hunter**! The fantasy flick flies into cinemas next year, and stars Vin Diesel as a man hellbent on tracking down the sorceress who cursed him with a hairy back. We think.

SCREAM

Whilst we're still not sold on the idea, Wes Craven's four-movie franchise is finally being adapted to the small screen whether we like it or not. In the first casting announcement for the show, it has now been revealed that **Alpha House**'s Willa Fitzgerald will play the show's lead, Emma Duval, described as being a classic beauty who has a shy, intellectual nature but is now part of the "in crowd"; **Arrow**'s Sin, Bex Taylor-Klaus is to play Audrey Jensen, a loner, artsy, aspiring filmmaker who used to be best friend's with Emma; **Premature**'s John Karna will be playing Noah Foster, a creative computer genius who has an encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture and is best friend's with Audrey (so much for being a loner); **The Dog Who Saved Christmas Vacation**'s Carlson Young will play Brooke Maddox, the popular, sexy and charismatic head of the cheerleading squad; and the relative unknown Amadeus Serafini will take on the role of Kieran Wilcox, a mysterious new kid who has a tough exterior and some potentially dark secrets. Bobby Campo (**The Final Destination**) has landed the recurring role of Seth Branson, touted as a dreamy, cool English teacher at Lakewood High (the same school from the original movies); **Sharknado**'s Connor Weil is to play Will Belmont, the all-American superstar basketball player of Lakewood; and the final name to be added to the series was V's Joel Gretsch as Sheriff Clark Hudson, described as one of the good guys of the series, similar to Dewey in the movie franchise. So we've got the brain, the athlete, the basket case, the princess, the criminal... wait, wrong project. But yeah, safe to say this **Scream** TV show is seemingly doing its best to tick all of the boxes of clichéd characters imaginable. If you needed reassuring that the series may actually work, there's some logic and hope (which we're dearly hanging on to) that all of these clichéd roles will all be a part of the self-aware, ironic ideology of what the movie series brought to audiences. AP

THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES

Like many of you suffering from PTSD (Post **Twilight** Stress Disorder), we're sick to the back teeth of vampires. That said, we can't help but make an exception when it comes to reporting Anne Rice-related news, for the original **Queen of the Damned** has recently renegotiated the movie rights to her most famous creation Lestat de Lioncourt, and the 11-volume strong book series he features in, **The Vampire Chronicles**. Universal have picked up the property, and have drafted in the ubiquitous Alex Kurtzman & Roberto Orci to pen the first screenplay. (Note to Hollywood: Other screenwriters exist.)

AND FINALLY...

Universal have begun work on an **Underworld** reboot. Nope, we can't work out why either.

+++

With the script now complete, Ridley Scott has confirmed Harrison Ford's involvement in the **Blade Runner** sequel. Having bickered for the last 32 years over whether Deckard was a Replicant or not (Scott says yay, while Ford steadfastly says nay), does his presence indicate the star was right all along? (Or did he just stop giving a crap when he saw what they were paying?)

+++

Like blood? Violence? Freaks of nature? Yes. Yes we do. And that's why we were provisionally excited to hear this month that Rob Zombie wants to bring back Captain Spaulding and the rest of the Firefly clan (**House of a 1000 Corpses & The Devil's Rejects**) for a third movie. Why 'provisionally'? Because rights owners Lionsgate are currently uninterested in pursuing the franchise further. (But **Leprechaun** they couldn't wait to reboot. Go figure.)

+++

Cult cartoon character and possible Hydrocephalus sufferer **Betty Boop** (seriously, has she had that cranium examined by a doctor?) is getting her first feature! This might be exciting to long-time fans of the character until they realise that the person producing is Simon Cowell, whose last foray into film resulted in the frankly dogshit **Pudsey: The Movie**.

+++

Star Wars: Episode VII has added Miltos Yerolemou to its cast. (That's the name of an actor, not somebody you'd find knocking around Jabba's Palace.) **Game of Thrones** aficionados will know Yerolemou as master swordsman Syrio Forel. It's probably not too much of a stretch to speculate he'll be utilising 'the pointy end' of a lightsaber at some juncture.

+++

In an unprecedented 'sensible' move, reboot extraordinaires Platinum Dunes has cancelled its **Monster Squad** remake, despite its long and no-doubt costly development period. The Bayman's got nards!

+++

The Weinstein Company are moving forward on their own remake of 1954's **The Seven Samurai**. Following in the footsteps of master filmmaker Akira Kurosawa? The bloke who made **Shark Tale**. Naturally.

+++

Paramount Pictures have said "go ninja, go ninja, GO!" to **TMNT 2**, and rumours abound the follow-up could introduce fan favourite villain Krang (the alien who looked like a chewed-up bollock). As the UK still await the reboot's release, we'll let you know next month whether we think this sequel talk is good news or bad.

+++

Whoa! Keanu Reeves is heading to TV, starring and producing **Rain**, an adaptation of author Barry Eisler's cult book series chronicling the exploits of assassin John Rain. We predict a hit.

+++

With Tom Hardy no longer the favourite to inherit Snake Plissken's eyepatch, current frontrunners to headline Joel Silver's 'shortsighted' **Escape from New York** reboot include **The Walking Dead**'s Jon Bernthal, **The Guest**'s Dan Stevens and **Pacific Rim**'s Charlie Hunnam.

+++

...Though it's probably safe to rule out the latter, as he's also rumoured to be director Guy Ritchie's favourite to play King Arthur in Warner Bros' planned six-film (not a typo) **Knights of the Roundtable** saga. After getting his start in Russell T Davies' cult drama **Queer as Folk**, Hunnam is already very familiar with the source material; he Camelot in that series.

TTC 405 stories by ANDREW POLLARD, KRIS HEYS, JACK BOTTOMLEY, DOMINIC CUTHBERT and ANDREW MARSHALL. Edited by KRIS HEYS.

WALKING TALL

by Andrew Pollard



Chances are, if you took a poll of genre fans and posed the question as to what's been their favourite TV show over the last decade, you'd likely end up seeing a lot of love for AMC's **THE WALKING DEAD**. After four seasons of gripping, traumatic survival adventure for Rick Grimes et al, the show's new season is just around the corner... and it's looking like it will be another dose of must-see TV for all...

THE
WALKING DEAD
SEASON 5 PREVIEW



As ever with any good preview, it's always best to pause and take stock of where we're at right now before we look ahead to what's on the horizon. Whilst some were maybe expecting the show's bubble to begin to burst or at least wane in popularity, Season 4 gave fans another great run of episodic television.

This upcoming season will be heavily focussed on Terminus and its inhabitants (we'll get to them later), but Andrew Lincoln's Rick and his group have been through the ringer to get to this apparent safe haven. As Season 4 began, Rick had apparently set down his gun, instead looking at the peaceful option of growing crops and rearing pigs at the prison complex that he and his fellow survivors called home. Of course, his non-gun-toting ways were seemingly thrown out of the window by the second episode of the season, which was for the best in the long run as Rick was battered physically and emotionally by the events that unfurled throughout Season 4's sixteen episodes.

With the threat of walkers largely kept at bay by the fence that surrounded the prison, the first major threat to our survivors in Season 4 was one of a flu-like infection. Forget swine flu, forget bird flu, you can even forget man flu (and according to many a male, that's worse than childbirth!)... this disease rewarded its victims with more than a congested nose, tickly cough and aching limbs – it effectively turned its hosts into zombies. At times like this, the close confines of a prison complex are not the most ideal setting, and so the infected were quarantined and tended to by, amongst others, Scott Wilson's Hershel Greene. Even more worrying for long-time fans of the show, one of the characters whose time was seemingly coming to an end at the hands of this infection was Steven Yeun's Glenn Rhee. Luckily, Glenn would survive and this viral threat would pass, but that wasn't where the trouble would end for the show's ever-willing survivors.

In terms of who was knocked off early on by this flu-like infection, it was some of the more recent, fresher additions to the show who succumbed to





death and subsequent reanimation. By now, though, fans of *The Walking Dead* know that nobody is safe; no character is deemed too precious to take their final breath - hell, we're still struggling to get over the deaths of Andrea, Lori, Shane and the heartbreaking reveal of what really happened to poor Sophia. Not to worry, for David Morrissey's Governor was soon to be back on the scene, bringing a heavy dose of death along with him. Having forged a new life for himself away from the once-idyllic Woodbury, the eye-patch-wearing big bad of Season 3 had his good eye firmly on taking over the prison from Rick. Despite Rick's insistence that the two camps - his and The Governor's - could share the complex, this wrong 'un had quite the bargaining chip: poor old Hershel. In a show of utter bastardness (if that isn't a real word, it should be), The Governor proceeded to decapitate Hershel in front of Rick and his camp, which included his two daughters, Maggie (Lauren Cohan) and Beth (Emily Kinney).

At the site of old-man Greene's bearded bonce being taken off, Rick and company fought back with a flurry of fists and bullets. Just when Rick's punch-up with The Governor seemed to be swinging the way of Morrissey's villain, up stepped Michonne (Danai Gurira) to run him through with her katana and to claim the revenge that she had for so long sought. Still, the prison was now near-enough destroyed and the once solid group led by Rick had been separated into smaller groups who were all forced to make their own way in the walker-riddled world. The light at the end of the tunnel seemed to be the apparent sanctity of a place called Terminus. In their journey to this believed safe haven, our splintered group were put even further through their paces. We had new additions straight from the comic book, like Dr. Eugene Porter (Josh McDermitt), Sgt Abraham Ford (Michael Cudlitz) and the brutal Joe (Jeff Kober). And we had some deaths, most notably the crazed actions of Brighton Sharbino's Lizzie, and the sad inevitability of Melissa McBride's Carol (who





came and went during the season) having to put a bullet in the misguided young girl.

As most of the familiar faces finally made it to Terminus, things were left with just the slightest whiff of suspicion of what really goes on at the facility. To make things even murkier, the season came to an end as Rick, Daryl (Norman Reedus), Glenn and crew were thrown into a boxcar away from the general population of Terminus. Dun, dun, *duuuuun...*

You Are What You Eat

So now you're fully up to speed, here we are at Terminus and with a whole host of questions that need answering, the biggest of which seems to revolve around just what really is going on at this supposed safe zone that the show has relocated the bulk of its action to.

In case you've not picked up on it yet from the show, from online speculation or from reading any of *The Walking Dead* comic books, the big theory is that the inhabitants of Terminus (Termites?) are cannibals of some sort, eating human flesh to stay alive in these harshest of times. Then there's the question of just when we will see Carol, Tyreese (Chad Coleman) and baby Judith turn up; plus what happened to Beth, and what are the real plans of Terminus' apparent leader, Gareth (Andrew J. West)? As ever, there'll be new faces aplenty and likely some familiar faces who will have their innards engulfed by a zombie as they bid adieu to the show.

On the topic of what really is going down at Terminus, Robert Kirkman, the show's creator, has promised that many of the answers will be revealed right out of the gate in the Season 5 premiere. Recent teaser footage has shown that Rick and his group will be made to suffer while locked up in the gloomy boxcar, although Kirkman also confirmed that the group will escape their confines by the time the first episode comes to a close, adding that the breakout will be done in a "creative manner." We already know that some





of the Terminus heavies will be entering the makeshift holding pen donned in gas masks, so could there maybe be some sort of strain in the air or could the Terminus guys be using some sort of gas to incapacitate their prisoners? It seems to us that some sort of transportation is going to be taking place, with footage showing the likes of Rick, Darryl and Maggie gagged and bound, out in the open, in what looks like some sort of act of punishment, torture or execution. That said, other teaser footage shows Lawrence Gilliard Jr.'s Bob Stookey pleading with the Terminus crew not to harm him and his fellow survivors, even going as far as blurting out about the whole "get Eugene to Washington, bro!" subplot. Could it be that Gareth's interest is piqued by Eugene's apparent knowledge of what has caused the world to become such a desolate hellhole? It seems very plausible.

Now, when the once-tight prison group were split up towards the end of Season 4, one of the more unlikely duos thrown together were Daryl and Beth. Partaking in moonshine and morgues, the pair struck up quite the bond. And then, just like that, Beth was kidnapped. Whilst we like to think of Daryl quietly singing, *"Just a few more hours, and I'll be right home to you, I think I hear them calling, Oh Beth what can I do, Beth what can... I do"* to himself (that'd be a KISS reference right there, readers), the reformed redneck barely had time to think before he came across Joe and his rabble of ragtag ruffians. But it's all still speculation as to what really happened to Beth, just who was it that kidnapped her, and what was the intention of this whole act. Now apparently being held at a hospital location, which itself has rumoured ties to the Terminus folks, this television version of Beth has already outlived her comic book counterpart. And therein lies some of the appeal of AMC's version of *The Walking Dead*.

Whereas other TV series that have been, or currently are, based on books of any form usually follow the original source, *The Walking Dead* is different. Already we have seen characters die in the show that lived longer in the books, and we've similarly seen people who died in the books





but are still alive in the show. Then there's curveballs like Daryl; a character who was created purely for the show. So, even if you've read all of the *Walking Dead* comics, you can still get taken aback by the show and it still manages to keep you on the edge of your seat. Ourselves, we're eagerly anticipating whether the events of *The Walking Dead* #100 finally play out on the small screen, but we'll leave that topic right there for fear of any major spoilers. Then again, the events of that particular issue may not happen at all in the show or may play out in an extremely different fashion. Those AMC folks certainly like to keep us guessing.

Fresh Meat

In terms of new faces, there are a couple that we are aware of at this stage, but there's also a bump up the card for some of the characters that we've been introduced to previously. Stepping up from guest stars to series regulars will be Michael Cudlitz's Abraham Ford, Josh McDermitt's Eugene Porter, Christian Serratos' Rosita, Alanna Masterson's Tara, and then what's described as being a "big presence" for Andrew J. West's Gareth. Additionally, it's said that we'll be seeing another appearance by Lennie James as Morgan Jones. If you're struggling to place the name, Morgan is a character Rick meets in the very first episode of *The Walking Dead*. He then turned up again in Season 3, this time being a few sandwiches short of a picnic when dealing with Rick and Carl (Chandler Riggs). No details are known on what the character's role will be when he does appear and whether or not it will be another one-shot type of appearance.

Of those new faces, the one that we have the most details on as we go to print is Father Gabriel Stokes. Having appeared in the comic books, the character will be played by *The Wire*'s Seth Gilliam in AMC's show. In the comics, Father Gabriel is a priest who Rick and his group of survivors encounter after they leave the prison. He debuted in *The Walking Dead* #61 and made regular appearances since then. As we mentioned earlier, though, the television show





often varies from its comic book counterpart, so we'll have to wait and see just how this version of the character is portrayed.

Another new addition to the show is a 17-year-old called Burton. This character (whose casting has yet to be revealed) has been confirmed to be another prisoner being held at Terminus, and will serve as an ally for Rick and company. What's most interesting about this character is that he only has one leg, which we're not sure whether was lost before the walker outbreak or since it all kicked off. There's even a suggestion that his leg could play out like the "tainted meat" moment in *The Walking Dead* #64, where Dale's leg is munched on by the Hunters group. Again, that's speculation at this stage, though.

Whilst we don't know who'll be partaking in any heavy petting activities, it's been confirmed by showrunner Scott Gimple that this new season will see another romance develop. Could it be Bob and Sasha (Sonequa Martin-Green) that get it on? Could the bond developed by Daryl and Beth progress to another level in Season 5? Could Carol and Tyreese fully embrace the "let bygones be bygones" mantra? Hell, could Abraham Ford show his caring side in a warm embrace with Eugene? A new romance isn't all that Gimple promised, for he added that we will be seeing more action than we've ever seen before, and that we'll get a lot of answers revealed in Season 5's opener. Then you have other members of the cast and crew describing this upcoming season as "brutal", "messy", and "explosive." Quite the exciting words, especially when you think of some of the more shocking moments of Season 4, such as Rick tearing out Joe's throat or Carol shooting a child in the head. *The Walking Dead* has given us so much enjoyment so far, and it appears that we have a lot more coming up for us to sink our teeth into in Season 5.

THE WALKING DEAD returns to UK screens
October 13th on FOX.





CONVERSATIONS WITH DEAD PEOPLE

Key cast and crew talk **SEASON 5** and more...



ROBERT KIRKMAN [CREATOR / WRITER]

On staying true to the source material...
Terminus certainly seems like a pretty major departure, but very quickly, early on in Season 5 we're gonna start getting back on track of dealing with some more comic book events – and while this will be a season same as the other seasons where there are things that we use and things that we don't use, and things that we adapt directly and change a lot, I think this is probably a season that's going to be pretty close to the comics and at the end of the day there's a lot of comic stuff that we're gonna be bringing in so there's a lot of things you guys have been reading in the comics and are excited about seeing that I think we're going to get to this season. There's some cool stuff ahead!

On the evolution of the Rick and the gang...
The thing to recognise is that all of them have been through this incredible trial leading up to that train car so it's not just Rick that is uniquely prepared to deal with the threat of Terminus – they're all very capable and all ready to do what they have to do to survive. This is a very dangerous and very different group of people that we're experiencing.



SCOTT GIMPLE [SHOWRUNNER / WRITER]

On the character's mindset going into this new season...
Once they lost the prison, once they lost Hershel, all bets were off. And I think they did find out that you 'can't' come back from the things you have done – you have to live with them. But also those things that you've done make you incredibly formidable. So now that everybody who is still alive has – in one way or another – done unspeakable things, who do they become? Who are they gonna be? This season is going to define these characters.

On how long *The Walking Dead* could run for...
I think it's possible it could go on and on. [Although] if it went longer than 10 or 12 years, considering the amount of deaths [in the show], it could shift into a whole new cast.



GALE ANNE HURD [PRODUCER]

On continuing to expand the scope of the show...
With this season we have some pretty spectacular scope, and you'll see us take some pretty big leaps with the characters and with the set-pieces. Bigger than ever. There's also a lot of really interesting Walker set-pieces.

On this season's multiple settings...
Because we left off on such a great cliffhanger, which is one of the first times we've left off in that situation, visually it takes us into different places – we'll probably revisit a few places you may recognise, but then there's new worlds being introduced as well. *The Walking Dead* world continues to expand and the characters continue to expand with it. There's a lot of cool landscape we're going to explore.





MELISSA MCBRIDE [CAROL PELETIER]

On the controversial steps Carol took in Season 4...

In her centre she feels justified and it comes from a place of caring – if it wasn't for that, what's the point of living. What's the point of having to do these horrible things if that's all the world is!

On her character's strengths...

I think the great thing about Carol is that she's prepared to do anything. She's coming to terms with the fact that this is the way the world is, this is what you have to do now. She's come to a place of courage to be able to do those tough things. She's a very empathetic character.



STEVEN YEUN [GLENN RHEE]

On how his character has changed since the zombie uprising...

I think everyone in this apocalypse has had their potential unlocked, and Glenn is someone who back at home wouldn't have been the person who he is. But now he has love, he has friendship, family – he has things to protect. He's learned a lot.

On Glenn's newfound outlook...

Last season he overcame an incredibly impossible task to find the people he lost. He held out hope and it got him to that place, and so moving forward they all find themselves in a very dire situation but I think Glenn 'still' holds out hope, he still has that fight in him. He's carrying on the legacies of everyone who have fallen before us.



ANDREW LINCOLN [RICK GRIMES]

On the rebirth of Rick...

It was great being reigned in by Hershel, but there's something about getting my gun back, my shoes on and getting sweaty and dirty and bloody that really feels right.

On what to expect in the premiere episode...

How these guys get out of this scrape... it's gonna be messy, it's gonna be brutal, it's gonna be thrilling! Because we start at the cliffhanger, this is the most complete returning episode I've ever read. It's got more action than even the taking of the prison, but it also tracks all the stories, all the characters, so well. The first few episodes are 'no holes barred', we come out of the blocks at full speed. It's an interesting experience, like we jumped right into the middle of the heart of darkness. Not only are the episodes astonishing for the energy and the emotional impact, but just story – how they are able to develop character in amongst this incredible thrill ride. I'm really, really excited by it. I think if we capture 70% of what I read in the script, the fans are going to be more than happy!

On whether he'd like to eventually step behind the camera...

I'd love to direct an episode myself. I directed a couple of episodes of *Teachers*, and loved it. Working with actors, and the technical aspect of capturing performance and visual storytelling is something that really excites me. If I'm still alive I'd love to do it; even if I'm not I'd love to come back!



DANAI GURIRA [MICHONNE]

On the challenges portraying Michonne...

Initially I was afraid of how physical she was, because she's definitely more agile than me; I had to catch up with what she was capable of! But even before Michonne was able to start working her way through her old wounds, there was emotional stuff that was under the surface that I had to stay connected to that actually proved to be really challenging because it was really dark hard stuff that she was holding onto really tightly. Now she's in a different place which is easier in some ways to play, but also challenging because she's vulnerable and that can be hard for her. She enjoys being tough but she knows that's not all she is.



THE FINAL ARENA TOUR

EXTRA
SHOWS
ADDED

JEFF WAYNE'S MUSICAL
VERSION OF

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

ALIVE
ON STAGE!



IN 3D HOLOGRAPHY

CONDUCTED BY

LIAM NEESON **JEFF WAYNE**

BRIAN MCFADDEN **CARRIE HOPE FLETCHER**

**JOSEPH
WHELAN**

**SHAYNE
WARD**

**JASON
DONOVAN**

NOVEMBER 2014

28 LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA
29 GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
30 MANCHESTER PHONES 4U ARENA

DECEMBER 2014

2 NOTTINGHAM CAPITAL FM ARENA
3 NEWCASTLE METRO RADIO ARENA

5 BIRMINGHAM LG ARENA
6 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
7/8 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA *
10/11 BOURNEMOUTH BIC *
13 LONDON THE O2 (MATINEE SHOW)
13 LONDON THE O2
14/15 BRIGHTON CENTRE *

THEWAROFTHEWORLDS.COM/TICKETS
LIVENATION.CO.UK - GIGSANDTOURS.COM

FACEBOOK.COM/THEWAROFTHEWORLDS

LIVE NATION & SJM CONCERTS PRESENT A TOP DRAWER TOURS PRODUCTION

AND CALLUM O'NEILL
AS HG WELLS

THE COMIC BOOKS OF THE DEAD

by Ed Fortune

Everyone knows that hit TV show **THE WALKING DEAD** began its unlife as a comic book, but the irrepressible mouldering corpses have been haunting the world of sequential art for much longer than that. We take a look at some of the more notable fiends amongst their ranks...

These days, the undead can be found almost everywhere, and comic books have always been quick to exploit the latest trends in order to push sales. To those with an awareness of history, it's a strange reversal of fortunes; back in the 1950's politically motivated moral panic over the gorier sorts of comic strips almost destroyed the entire industry. Concerns that seeing rotting monsters on the printed page would lead children to delinquency resulted in strict regulation of comics at the time. Though the evidence to support this claim has long since been proven as fraudulent nonsense, the damage done back then continues to impact the industry to this day.

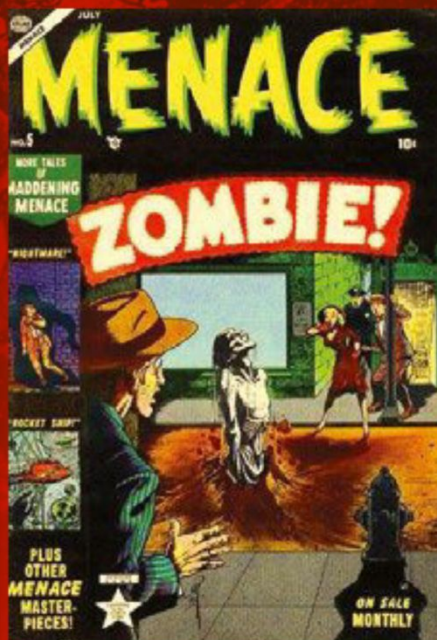
Luckily, you can't keep a good monster down, especially one that is dead to begin with. An early example of a zombie comic book character that's still around today is *Solomon Grundy*. Named after the nursery rhyme, Grundy first appeared in *All American Action Comics* #61 back in 1944 and was originally a foe for the Green Lantern.

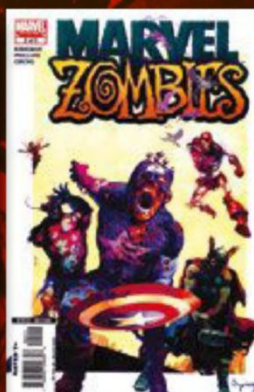
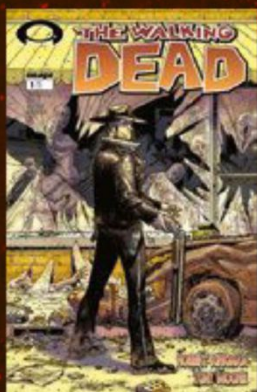
His origins are of a man murdered and dumped in Gotham City's Slaughter Swamp. The zombification process apparently took decades and in one version of his origin tale, it is strange plant life which keeps him animated. Whatever brought him back also bulked him out; Grundy is a regular foe of both Batman and Superman, and a tough one at that. The simple-minded monster is a firm favourite amongst fans and authors alike. He's weathered censorship, reboots and cartoon series re-imaginings, and it's hard to imagine a DC universe without him in it. Of note is his creator, Alfred Bester; one of the roundly acknowledged masters of science fiction and fantasy today.

Other renowned writers have been responsible for zombie comic book characters, of course. Stan Lee has the credit for *Simon William Garth* AKA *The Zombie*. This 1953 hero first appeared in *Menace*, one of the many comic books to be culled by the narrow-minded moral panic and subsequent censorship

of the time. *Menace's* demise in part lead to the formation of Marvel Comics itself, and Stan Lee took his resurrected abomination with him. When Lee decided to prelaunch the format of anthology horror comics back in the mid-'70s, he turned to his old creation to herald this new project. Despite having *Howard the Duck* creator and industry legend Steven Gerber behind it, the book failed to spark either moral panic or public interest; it only lasted ten issues. *Simon William Garth's* origin story was pretty tame: he was the victim of a botched voodoo ritual and thus kept some semblance of his humanity. The character would return of course, but not until zombies became popular again.

During the '80s, comic books flirted with the idea of undead adventures, but nothing really stuck. Despite a few indie comics here and there, vampires, werewolves and spectres took precedence over zombie related shenanigans. Two exceptions stand out: the shambling horrors in IPC Magazines'





Scream! comic, and Simon Furman's Transformer's story, *City of Fear*. Zombie robots. In disguise. It's still regarded as one of the best comic book Transformers storylines to this day - and quite rightly so.

The nineties had more variety. Albany-based black and white indie comics company Fantaco got their hands on the license for *Living Dead* franchised books. Titles included the likes of *Night of the Living Dead: London*, *King of the Dead*, *Kill Me Slowly*, *Scab*, and *Uptown Zombies*. They mostly focused on the shock factor, and with books like *Dead Chicks in Lace: Bloodletting Lingerie Special*, they're hardly worth writing home about. The '90s also gave us Kevin Eastman's less than stellar *Zombie War*, which looked great but lacked a coherent plot.

It would take until 2003's *The Walking Dead* to bring back zombies as something comic book creators considered worth their time. At the time, the idea of a zombie comic was a dodgy prospect; previous attempts had not sold

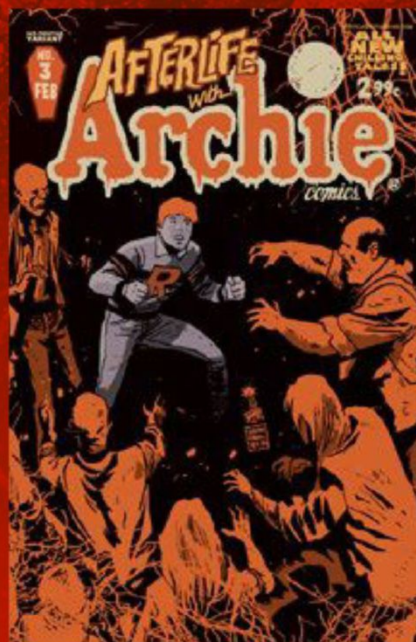
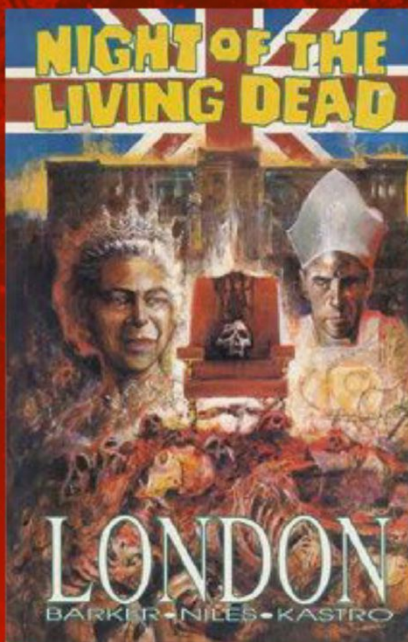
very well. Image, the book's publishers, wanted something more sci-fi, so writer Robert Kirkman told them a little white lie: he claimed that aliens would turn up at some point in the story and take responsibility for the zombie apocalypse! *The Walking Dead* went on to become a bestseller and Kirkman's sleight-of-hand was swiftly forgiven. They did provide an alien ending to the book in issue 75 as a joke, however.

The success of *The Walking Dead* led to a resurrection in horror books. Marvel got in on the act first, launching an undead version of the Fantastic Four in their *Ultimate Fantastic Four* book and proceeded to produce endless iterations of a series called 'Marvel Zombies', which also brought back a lot of old Marvel characters including the aforementioned Simon William Garth. It even led to an inevitable cross over: *Marvel Zombies vs. Army of Darkness*. That's right - Ash from *The Evil Dead* movies got to lock horns with zombie Captain America!

DC followed suit with its lacklustre *Blackest Night* crossover event. In a stroke of genius, it used the notion that resurrection was so common in the DC universe because dark forces wanted to be able to generate an army of super powered zombies. Despite this great idea, the series was a mess but it did do very well. Archie Comics also joined in, with the excellent *Afterlife with Archie*, aimed at teenage horror fans. A dark version of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* is also planned.

Other undead inspired books worth a look include Garth Ennis's *Crossed*, Warren Ellis's *Black Gas*, and Max Brook's *The Extinction Parade*. These have helped truly return zombie books from the dead and it looks like they're here to stay. Horror comics are back, and it's all thanks to zombies!

Volume 22 of THE WALKING DEAD is released in trade paperback on November 11th.



THE Z LIST

LAST MONTH, THE ENTIRE STARBURST TEAM WERE SEALED INTO THE SECRET MILITARY-GRADE UNDERGROUND BUNKER HIDDEN BENEATH OUR HQ. THE REASON: ZOMBIES! DISAPPOINTINGLY, THIS WASN'T DUE TO THE DAWNING OF THE INEVITABLE ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE (DESPITE WHAT THE ED HAD ORIGINALLY TOLD US TO GET US DOWN THERE), OUR GATHERING HAD A MUCH GREATER PURPOSE. THE MISSION: COME UP WITH THE DEFINITIVE COUNTDOWN OF THE GREATEST ZOMBIE MOVIES EVER MADE. THIRTY DAYS AND SEVERAL FATALITIES LATER (THERE WERE A FAIR FEW DISAGREEMENTS), WE PRESENT TO YOU... **THE 50 BEST ZOMBIE FILMS TO SEE BEFORE YOU'RE UNDEAD!**

50

PET SEMETARY (1989)

"I don't wanna be buried in a Pet Semate-he-ry," sang The Ramones for the film's closing credits, and we have to agree, knowing no good will come of it. It's all very well having a childish misspelt cemetery for pets close to a road which "uses up a lot of animals". Just make sure that the site isn't near an ancient Indian burial ground with the powers to bring the dead back to life. Fido will never be the same again, without his little doggy soul. And for the love of God, never bury a child there. RP



49

THE VIDEO DEAD (1987)

You're in the wrong place if you're looking for genuine horror, but if you're in the mood for a few undead laughs with a liberal splatter of blood 'n' guts, this might do the trick. An old TV set bound for a paranormal research institute is mistakenly delivered to a secluded family home where it serves as a portal through which zombies are able to return to the land of the living. Featuring some endearingly bad acting and some of the most horrible yet lovable living dead ever created (the way they chuckle to each other after dispatching their victims is quite adorable), this movie proves that '80s zombies really were the most fun! CJ



48

WORLD WAR Z (2013)

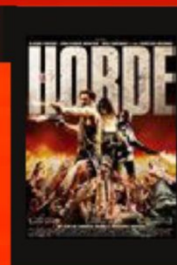
Based on Max Brooks' 2006 novel, Brad Pitt's thriller gives you a world tour of a zombie-invested Earth. With zombies more akin to the ones you'd see in *28 Days Later*, this film is chock full of fast-paced action, slick CGI, and enough tension to get even an undead heart pounding! Book fans might not like how much it deviates from its source material, but as a zombie film in and of itself it's a terrifying ride. And really, how can you not like a film that gives us a Doctor WHO joke? KF



47

THE HORDE (2010)

Corrupt cops descend upon the crumbling Parisian tower block hideout of a gang of ruthless Nigerian drug-dealers to avenge the death of a colleague. The bust goes horribly wrong when the city starts burning and savage flesh-eaters pour into the block in search of fresh meat. *The Horde* earns its place in any zombie aficionado's affections by virtue of the astonishing sequence where one of the beleaguered cops takes on the horde from the top of a car, shooting and slicing and dicing before he disappears under a sea of grasping, clutching undead hands. *Quelle facon de passer*, as the French would undoubtedly say! PM



46

CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS (1973)

Bob Clark's underrated horror comedy is one of the oddest additions to the zombie subgenre. Alan, a campy, sociopathic hipster, takes his drama buddies to an island cemetery and dig up a corpse named Orville (not to be confused with the incontinent duck). Using the body in a satanic ritual to raise the dead, the thespians soon regret their decision. The script is Sam Raimi meets Shakespeare, and it's grainier than rice, but beneath the scuzz and Play-Doh prosthetics is a black comedy that helped pave the way for the likes of *The League of Gentlemen* and beyond. DC



45

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3 (1985)

This might seem a bit of an odd choice, but the combination of military experiments, a zombie army, a teenage love story (admittedly a bit gothy but not quite as *Twilight* as it sounds), loads of campy dialogue and some awesome special effects make this a worthy addition to the list. We're in safe horror hands with Brian Yuzna (the director of *Society*, *The Dentist*, and *Beyond Re-Animator* among other favourites), and even if you don't enjoy the film it's got an excellent cast which is ideal for a game of "ohhh bugger, what were they in?" CJ



44

THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW (1988)

Truth is very often stranger than fiction, as author Wade Davis discovered when he was sent by a large pharmaceutical conglomerate to Haiti to investigate the reports of a potent mixture of local plants, which induced a catatonic zombie-like state in the victim. Bill Pullman starred in Wes Craven's adaptation based on Davis's non-fiction book, but despite the harrowing scenes of needles to the eyes and being buried alive, it's still the notion of having a six-inch nail driven through a tender part of the anatomy that makes our eyes water in the STARBURST offices and causes our legs to cross involuntarily. We'll take the potion please. RP



43

DEATHDREAM (1972)

Before hitting big with teen sex comedy *Porkies* (1982), director Bob Clark made a trio of influential horror movies including the aforementioned *Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things* (1972), *Black Christmas* (1974) and this powerful allegory about a killed-in-action Vietnam War soldier (Richard Backus) who returns home as a blood-sucking zombie. Outstanding performances by Lynn Carlin and John Marley as the doting parents who refuse to believe their hero son is a monster, elevate this low budget effort into a bonafide classic, and Tom Savini's early make-up job on the slowly rotting zombie soldier still makes for chilling viewing. JT



42

REDNECK ZOMBIES (1989)

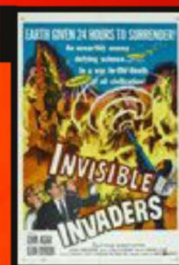
Tobacco chewin', gut chompin', cannibal kinfolk from Hell! A super low budget 1989 straight to video release from Troma (who else?), this is a masterclass in fabulous absurd stupidity. A bunch of backwards hillbillies find a barrel of radioactive waste in the woods, and use it to replace their broken-down home-brewing equipment. Of course, there will be disastrous consequences for anyone drinking the contaminated moonshine, and even worse things in store for the group of sophisticated city folk camping out in the woods that weekend. And what's up with that butcher in the ice cream van? CJ



41

INVISIBLE INVADERS (1959)

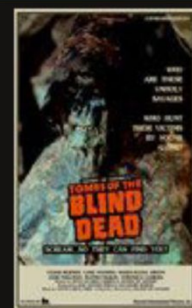
An undead apocalypse as a result of something odd from space? A zombie bunker siege? Military types who'll shoot the living as quick as the dead? Social commentary? All modern zombie tropes brought to us by George Romero, right? Well no, actually. *Invisible Invaders* was classic low budget '50s sci-fi about thankfully invisible aliens who had already conquered our moon (gee whizz, we'll fetch our handbags) and were possessing Earth's dead to kill the living. It featured all of the above, nine years before *NotLD*. Supposedly about nations working together but you can't help but notice the zombies are all middle-aged businessmen. Now *that's* commentary. Right kids? JK



40

TOMBS OF THE BLIND DEAD (1972)

This Spanish horror film resembles an Italian sex comedy (complete with lesbian schoolgirls) for the better part of its first third, and it isn't until nearly half an hour into it that you see the zombie Knights Templar, but it's quite worth the wait. They look like actual corpses, desiccated from centuries in their tombs. The finale is pure terror, and a climactic scene on board a train still shocks. The film spawned three sequels, with *Return of the Evil Dead* being the best and *Ghost Galleon* being best avoided. NS



39

PONTYPOOL (2008)

An outbreak like no other has begun in a rural Ontario town, but instead of a physical virus, the English language itself has become contaminated. Certain words are repeated by the infected in aural propagation, their minds eventually reduced to little more than the hissing of static on the airwaves. Told entirely within the confines of a ramshackle local radio station and with only fragmented phone calls, vague news reports and the muted cacophony of panic to relay the terror and carnage going on outside its doors, the film is a claustrophobic mystery of madness and audio from start to finish. AM



38

HORROR EXPRESS (1972)

British archeologist Christopher Lee discovers what he believes to be a million year old missing link encased in ice in Manchuria. Anxious to share his discovery with the world, he climbs aboard the Trans-Siberian Express with his meat popsicle, encountering a Grand Hotel of characters that include skeptical, fellow scientist Peter Cushing, a scene stealing Rasputin-like monk, assorted Russian socialites and Telly Savalas as an arrogant Russian army captain. Trouble starts when the creature thaws out, absorbing its victim's brains creating a horde of white-eyed, bleeding zombies while jumping from body-to-body. It's up to Lee and Cushing to join forces to stop this monster and its minions from wiping out mankind before they get to civilization. WSB



37

JUAN OF THE DEAD (2011)

A group of petty and slightly dim-witted criminals eking out an existence in Havana find their lives interrupted by the sudden and inexplicable outbreak of ravenous undead. With the government content to write off the zombie attacks as dissident uprisings orchestrated by the US, Juan and his friends instead attempt to make a business out of dealing with people's zombie problems for them and training folks how to combat the infestation with fishing harpoons, TV aerials, paddles, axes, baseball bats and machetes, and survive in a new Cuba not that different from its Communist past. AM



36

LAND OF THE DEAD (2005)

George Romero's fourth film in his continually evolving series was described by Guillermo del Toro as the moment when Michelangelo was finally given another ceiling to paint. If the result wasn't quite the Sistine Chapel, Romero's eagerly awaited return to the genre contained sufficient thrills, gore, laughs and social commentary to suggest that the Master's palette hadn't dried up. Its depiction of a zombie attack on a high rise refuge for the super-rich in Pittsburgh is a pointed satire on an insular western culture that exhibits an increasingly pervasive desire to keep 'them' out. The fact that 'them' now includes both the zombies and the poor makes it one of Romero's most relevant films for contemporary audiences. PB



35

BURIAL GROUND: THE NIGHTS OF TERROR (1981)

Andrea Bianchi's Fulci-inspired film is a brilliant treat. Socialites visit a remote island intent on partying the day and night away, but unfortunately for them a mysterious professor accidentally resurrects the dead, spoiling their fun. Gore runs galore as zombies creatively kill off the jet-setters one-by-one, but it's little person Peter Bark (who bears an uncanny resemblance as a miniature Dario Argento) who steals the show. Bark, who was around 30 when he filmed this (he sadly passed away of an aging disease a few years ago), plays a 12-year old with an Oedipal complex for his mother, the beautiful Mariangela Giordano, whose demise by her zombieified son ends in a memorable, ghastly way. WSB



34

PARANORMAN (2012)

It may be one of the only kid-friendly films on this list, but that's nothing to be scoffed at! Poor bullied Norman's only friends in the world are ghosts, but when a ritual to protect the town goes inevitably wrong, the spirit of a long-dead witch is unleashed, along with a horde of rather pissed-off zombies. With fine attention to detail in its ghoulish stop motion creations, particularly the lumbering green zombies, *ParaNorman* is a beautifully animated film, and one not afraid to deal with dark themes in its exploration of life as an outcast. KM



33

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE (1959)

A film so ineptly bad, it became a legendary comedy epic by accident. We don't know what plans 1-8 were, but plan 9, concerning the resurrection of the recently dead to prevent the invention of the destructive Solaranite by a race of aliens whose spaceships were actually hubcaps, probably would've been more successful had they not revived Bela Lugosi (who turned into his wife's chiropractor in the process), or Tor Johnson, an actor so wooden even Gerry Anderson couldn't have animated his performance. Still, humanity survived, and as Criswell somberly intoned, "Can you prove it DIDN'T happen?" RP



32

BEFORE DAWN (2012)

Dominic Brunt's directorial debut is one of the most emotional, affecting and downright bloody terrifying movies in recent zombie cinema history. *Emmerdale* star Brunt, a long-time zombie fanatic, directs and co-stars with his wife Joanne in this intimate tale of a marriage disintegrating as the world goes to pieces. Alex and Meg are worlds apart and yet unimaginable horror brings them together again in the most appalling circumstances. Desperately bleak, beautifully performed and filmed with a vibrancy its tiny budget belies with every frame, *Before Dawn* is a bona fide zombie movie masterpiece and an outstanding example of low budget British cinema in its own right. PM



31

THE BATTERY (2012)

This rambunctious low budget debut from writer/director/star Jeremy Gardner doesn't behave like your typical movie on this list, sharing more in common with a mumblecore effort. Following two young baseball players travelling through the back-roads of an infested Connecticut, the film offers up a study in culture and masculinity with a killer soundtrack to boot. Ranging from filthy black comedy to poignant drama, *The Battery* is an antidote to brainless living dead films. Sure, it's not perfect (the zombies are just Gardner's mates in a bit of make-up), but it's certainly a diamond in the rough, rotting flesh. DC



30

NIGHT OF THE CREEPS (1986)

Fred Dekker directed so few films, but the man should get ample credit for making one of the most enjoyable B-movies in modern history, populating it with characters who are likeable and relatable, in addition to being far more clever than we can hope to be. That's before space aliens and slugs that turn people into zombies, and even an axe-wielding maniac hacking people to death. Throw in smarmy fraternity types, and it's like *The Return of the Living Dead* has met *Revenge of the Nerds*. Brilliant lines, stupid action, and a fucking flame thrower. Words can't begin to describe its wonderfulness. NS



29

NIGHT OF THE COMET (1984)

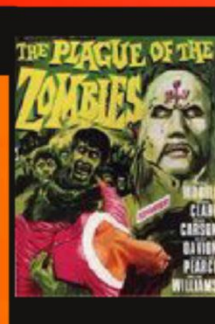
Earth passes through the tail of a comet for the first time in 65 million years. Everyone not protected by steel is either turned into a pile of red dust or a zombie. Depending on level of exposure, you have your mindless zombies chomping on some flesh or your crazed zombie stockboys making clever quips. Yes: zombie stockboys. It's a B-movie through and through, but never stoops to playing things with a wink and a nod. That said, there are still valley girls unloading submachine guns in the streets of California, making this a solid blast and a half. NS



28

THE PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES (1966)

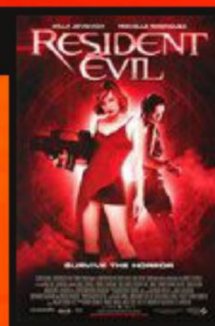
Coming two years before a certain Mr. Romero redefined the zombie, this classic Hammer production is a later example of the zombie-as-voodoo-slave film, and a terribly British one at that. Set around a Cornish village led by a sinister squire who's been dabbling in black magic, *Plague* stars André Morell as an expert doctor so gentlemanly that he could probably stop a zombie in its tracks just by tutting and shaking his lapels. But it's not all jolly, cheery stuff – in the film's most iconic scene, zombies clamber out of the ground in a misty church graveyard. It's eerily atmospheric and fabulously frightening. KM



27

RESIDENT EVIL (2002)

Taking characters and locations from the original videogame, this first movie looked to forge its own narrative using these elements. With decent looking effects both practical and computer generated, the doomed world of Raccoon City was brought to the silver screen by franchise mainstay, writer/director/producer Paul W.S. Anderson. The direction it was moving clearly favoured action over horror or suspense, but as taken as a standalone movie, this entry serves as a somewhat successful homage to the much-loved videogame series. LR



26

28 WEEKS LATER (2007)

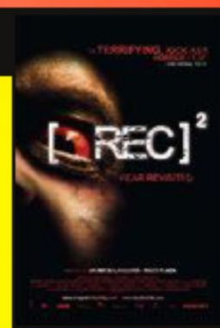
Sequels tend to hold an unpredictable nature in terms of audience acceptance, and this one was by no means different. Though director Juan Carlos Fresnadillo's film may have failed to live up to the critical acclaim of Danny Boyle's 2002 original, *Weeks* remains more than a worthy follow-up, boasting a cast that includes Jeremy Renner, Idris Elba, Rose Byrne, Imogen Poots and the eyeball-squelching Robert Carlyle. The superbly paced opening segment focusing on the derailment of a boarded-up, countryside safe-house is easily the highlight of the film; the distressing event asking some poignant moral questions in regards to extreme survival. DS



25

[REC]² (2009)

Paco Plaza and Jaume Balagueró's follow-up to their face-scrapingly frightening Spanish handheld horror successfully bucks the trend of forgettable sequels. Occurring 15 minutes after the first film, the narrative splits between a Special Forces team entering the quarantined building and a group of kids who become embroiled in the undead panic. After the petrifying finale of *[REC]*, *[REC]2* reveals the fate of reporter Ángela Vidal (Manuela Velasco) and boasts an ambitious twist which reveals more to these "zombies" than meets the bloodshot eye. *[REC]2* is intensely satisfying, although the less said about Plaza's second-rate *[REC]3: Genesis* the better. JB



24

COCKNEYS VS. ZOMBIES (2012)

Written by former *Doctor Who* and *Torchwood* scribe James Moran, this entry proved that there could be life after *Shaun of the Dead* for the British zombie movie. Broader than the latter, *CvZ* is part heist movie, part *Last of the Summer Wine* spin-off, as a bunch of bumbling bank robbers find themselves trapped in London during an outbreak of the undead. Furiously funny and gloriously gruesome (see a zombie baby drop-kicked!), the icing on the cake is a hale-and-hearty supporting cast of the best in geriatric British talent including Honor Blackman, Tony Selby, Dudley Sutton, Alan "Get the fuck out of my East End!" Ford and the much-missed Richard Briers. The undead never stood a chance. PM



23

BLACK SHEEP (2006)

In terms of bizarre zombie movies, Jonathan King's directorial debut is right up there. As darkly humorous an entry as you'll find on this list, the action is centred in New Zealand and on some sheep that are engineered into a savage, flesh-hunting, mutton menace. And if you think that this entertaining film, complete with its sheep-phobia subplot, will be low on the gore front, the joke's firmly on ewe! Not just content with crazed sheep, the attacks and violence spread to other species and the results are most definitely messy. Whereas the verdict is still firmly out on the upcoming *Zombeavers*, this animals-with-baaaaad-attitudes tale is most certainly worth your time. AP



22

THE BEYOND (1981)

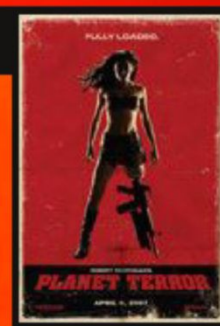
Often recognised as one of Lucio Fulci's greatest movies, *The Beyond* features a little bit of everything: a creepy Louisiana hotel built on one of the seven gateways to Hell, incredibly gory scenes of mutilation, a sensational score by Fabio Frizzi, and pipe-cleaner spiders. There's also a rather spectacular shot of a young girl being shot straight in the face, and a horde of resurrected cadavers roaming the corridors of the hospital. Chock-full of dream-like images, it began a legacy of Eibon symbol tattoos. It even influenced a song by Swedish rockers Europe, *Seven Doors Hotel*. What's not to like! MU



21

PLANET TERROR (2007)

A go-go dancer with an assault rifle for a leg attempts to save humanity from a zombie apocalypse. It's a concept so bonkers only maverick director Robert Rodriguez could pull it off! Originally released as one half of Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino's criminally ignored *Grindhouse* (2007), *Planet Terror* eventually achieved cult appeal when it went solo later that same year. Headlined by Rose McGowan as the aforementioned machinegun-limbed saviour Cherry Darling, Rodriguez's superb cast featured many of his repertory regulars, including Bruce Willis, Josh Brolin, Jeff Fahey and, of course, Michael Parks as Texas Ranger Earl McGraw (*From Dusk Till Dawn* / *Kill Bill Vol. 1* / *Death Proof*). CMJ



20 THE LAST MAN ON EARTH (1964)

For many years, *The Last Man on Earth* was a footnote of cinematic history. Old sci-fi encyclopaedias will tell you that *The Omega Man* (1971) was the definitive adaptation of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*; the rarely shown *Last Man* (they'd probably never seen it) was just a forgotten duffer. All a bit rum as it's darkly brilliant and the only film to ever take on Matheson's novel and do the ending properly. As the title suggested, it was the whole bloody point (no stake-related pun intended) of the story and had nothing to do with Bob Marley (sigh). Rediscovered by many after the Will Smith debacle, accept no substitutes. JK



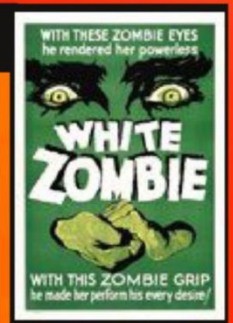
19 THE FOG (1980)

One of the greatest horror directors of all time helming a movie with some spooky zombie-type pirates taking revenge on a seaside town for misdemeanours of yesteryear? Yes please! Held together by classic performances from genre vets like Adrienne Barbeau, Tom Atkins and Jamie Lee Curtis, this John Carpenter effort may not scream zombie walkers and flesh being gnawed away from bone but it certainly hits many a correct note in terms of its undead presence. Atmospheric, uneasy and held together by some sultry, chemistry-driven turns, *The Fog* is one of those films that fans of '80s horror hold close to their hearts. Even though we dig Tom Welling, just don't get us started on that 2005 remake... AP



18 WHITE ZOMBIE (1932)

After Universal struck big with *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* in 1931, independent producer/director team Victor and Edward Halperin borrowed Universal sets, props and star Bela Lugosi to make the first feature length zombie movie ever! Set in Haiti, Lugosi plays 'Murder' Legendre, a voodoo master whose zombies work in a vast sugar cane mill. When Legendre zombiefies a white woman at the behest of a lustful plantation owner, all hell breaks loose. The Halperins shot *Zombie* (as it was originally titled) in eleven days for \$50,000 and the movie went on to become a hit; the zombie movie was born! JT



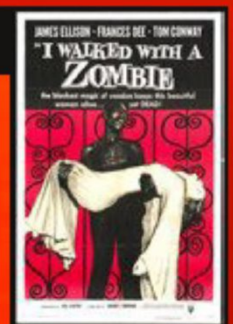
17 ARMY OF DARKNESS (1992)

The first two entries in Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* series may stretch the definition of zombie movie (hence their absence in this list), but there's literal armies of reanimated dead bodies attacking en masse in the third, so that qualifies in our book. Trapped in medieval times, hapless hero Ash (Bruce Campbell) has to battle knights, winged deadites, multiple evil versions of himself and a legion of the dead in order to return to the present day. Thanks to a reshot ending, depending on which version you're watching, he either succeeds, or fails in spectacular fashion. Now, where's our boomstick? IN



16 I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE (1943)

The short but captivating lovechild of Jacques Tourneur and Val Lewton; a movie which proves the misconception that real zombie movies began with the Romero reinvention as the post-modern ghouls of modern pop culture. Young Canadian nurse Betsy arrives in Haiti to care for nightgown model Jessica, whose weirdo behaviour has the locals convinced she is a zombie. This straightforward but gripping tale is told with a mesmerising skill that is sadly lost on some modern filmmakers. The ending scenes alone will haunt you for years to come. No flesh eating or gore is necessary here, just a vista of strange and unusual rituals, creating a touching and affectionate horror classic. Luminous and enduring, it's quite simply one of the best horror movies ever made. JR



15

DEAD SNOW (2009)

These days, sadly, Nazi zombies seem to be everywhere you look. Whilst some succeed, many fail, so if you're looking for a good example of the growing subgenre, look no further than Tommy Wirkola's *Dead Snow*. Set in the snowy hills of Norway, this creepy and comical entry to our list centres on some irked undead who are pissed off at the thought of losing their precious gold coins. Humour, horror references and some horrendous kills, this zombie film is one that fans lapped up. As a result, a sequel, *Dead Snow: Red vs Dead*, is ready for a release later this year. AP



14

DELLAMORTE DELLAMORE (1994)

Zombie movies tend to be strange, but this Italian horror flick goes one step beyond. Rupert Everett stars in the role of a cemetery caretaker who has to shoot the zombies that rise from his local graveyard. The twist is that this is really a romantic comedy, with Everett's incompetent and impotent character attempting to find love in the weirdest circumstances. Best watched with slightly too much to drink inside you, it's a surrealist classic that focuses on a variety of odd vignettes rather than gore and has one of the most memorable endings ever made. EF



13

LIVING DEAD AT MANCHESTER MORGUE (1974)

Jorge Grau's film was intended as a cheap Romero knock-off, but his ingenuity, visual flair (not to mention fantastic use of location) and shocking gore meant it gained legions of fans in its own right. Although most of the foreign cast are dubbed, the sardonic dialogue is distinctly British, and it's a hell of a lot of fun. It became notorious during the video nasties debacle of the '80s, appearing on the original list of seventy-two banned titles, although it's now available fully uncut. For lots more on this seminal movie, see **HORROR OBSCURA** in Issue 401. MU



12

DAY OF THE DEAD (1985)

The third installment of George A. Romero's zombie movies, *Day of the Dead* managed to amp up the gore, human confrontation, and complete sense of desperation at the deterioration of civilisation. Setting the action in an underground bunker is a masterstroke; civilian scientists clash with hot-headed army personnel over the use of captive zombies, and any other petty issue, basically. The series' first sympathetic zombie, Bub (Sherman Howard), and crazed army tyrant Rhodes (Joe Pilato) are both standout characters in a claustrophobic, shock-filled nightmare which still holds the power to jolt and repulse in equal measures. Choke on 'em! MU



11

ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS (1979)

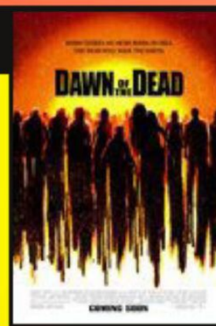
Perhaps best known as the one where a zombie takes a bite out of a shark, Lucio Fulci's tale of a zombie outbreak spreading from a tropical island to New York is full of infamous moments (eyeball kebab anyone?), yet it is also so much more than the sum of its notorious parts. Not a film to be watched if you're in the mood for something fast and loud (both the narrative and the zombies are sloooooow), its lack of pace is actually its main strength, combining with a soundtrack that is unnervingly quiet to create a dreamlike effect in which details such as being able to run fast are utterly irrelevant. Bleak, bloody and oddly beautiful. PB



10

DAWN OF THE DEAD (2004)

The die-hards cried heresy when it was announced that Romero's classic was up for the remake treatment, but Snyder's film more than bucked the trend of bad remakes. It dared to actually try to be better than the original. A tense opening sequence sets the tone, child zombies, exploding petrol stations and all. Athletic zombies gave a new fear factor to the usually shambling dead and characters gave you a reason to root for them. A zombie giving birth and a sequence to rival *The A-Team* round off what is now considered, a full decade later, to be a classic in the genre. JG



9

RE-ANIMATOR (1985)

With genre icon Jeffrey Combs providing an uneasy, slimy central performance as Herbert West - an intense, deranged medical student who aims to reanimate dead tissue - Stuart Gordon's movie sticks in the memory of many a horror fan. Despite spawning several varyingly worse sequels (1990's *Bride of Re-Animator* and 2003's *Beyond Re-Animator*), the original, itself loosely based on a H.P. Lovecraft story, is a classic of the horror genre. It may not feature the level of undead hordes we've become accustomed to in earlier entries on our list, but in its uncut form *Re-Animator* boasts many an unforgettable moment that could rival them all in the gore stakes. AP



8

ZOMBIELAND (2009)

Ruben Fleischer's feature debut moulds a flesh-chomping apocalypse with charismatic and quite surprising comedy. Shot with style and a somewhat gruesome kind of grace, the director has a hell of a time exploring edgy ways of zombie destruction, and this is perfectly embodied by Woody Harrelson's standout character Tallahassee. *Zombieland* injects a touch of genre self-awareness for good measure, brought to us through the 'Rules of Survival', including "Beware of Bathrooms", "Enjoy the Little Things", "Limber Up" and "Check the Back Seat". The film is enveloped with sharp coolness, starting with, lets face it, Tallahassee's whole outfit, and then concluding with the zippy amusement park landscape. If that wasn't enough, then behold Bill Murray's outrageous cameo appearance! DS



7

[REC] (2007)

Arguably the greatest found-footage film ever made, Spanish horror flick *[REC]* shows the worst that can happen when you're quarantined inside an infection-ridden building with a camera and an overly curious reporter. It's a breathless swirling ride which never pounds on the brakes, building up to a terrifying loft scene that'll make night-vision a default setting for all your future nightmares. If you need modern proof that zombies can still cook up genuine nerve-jangling scares, look no further than this classic and its equally brilliant funhouse-trip of a sequel (see number 25). AS



6

THE RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD (1985)

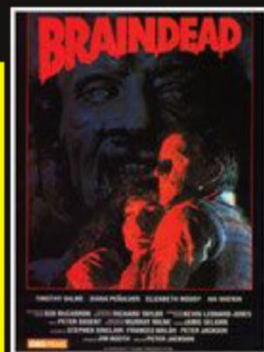
Alien scribe Dan O'Bannon not only helped introduce the Xenomorph to the world, he was also the first to give us running zombies, their penchant for "brrraaaaiiinnss!", reanimated split-dogs and Linnea Quigley in a reverse-merkin. Playing on the pretense that the events portrayed in Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* were based on a real incident, two unfortunate medical supply warehouse workers accidentally re-unleash the chemical that had originally caused it, and, in their increasingly sloppy attempts to cover up the mess, instead resurrect the ravenous residents of the adjacent cemetery. Scored by a choice selection of synth-pop, psychobilly and punk tracks, *Return* barrels along at a breathless pace, all the while showcasing A-grade performances from its B-movie cast. KH



5

BRAINDEAD (1992)

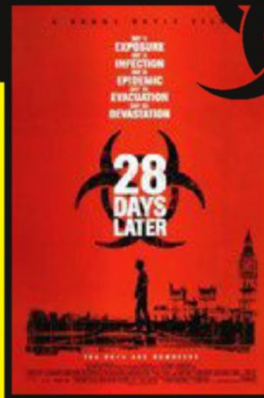
It's hard not to resent Bilbo Baggins. *Lord of the Rings* may be one of the greatest trilogies of all time, but we miss Peter Jackson, gore genius. *Braindead* has aged terrifically, losing none of its power to disgust (we'll pass on the custard, thanks), thrill or amuse over the years. In Lionel and his lawnmower, we get a hero to match Ash and his chainsaw; in his romance, a love story which pre-empts *Shaun of the Dead*. Even now, it remains one of the greatest horror comedies and zombie films ever made. Pesky Hobbitses. JH



4

28 DAYS LATER (2002)

Despite its origins being buried deep in the 'cosy catastrophe' apocalyptic fiction genre of British writers such as John Wyndham and John Christopher, Danny Boyle's triumphant film is anything but cosy. Its protagonist Jim (Cillian Murphy) wakes up, *Day of the Triffids* style, in a hospital after the UK has gone to Hell. He and other survivors he meets must make their way to a military sanctuary just outside a burning Manchester where Christopher Eccleston's startlingly plummy-voiced Major West is waiting with his handful of gun-crazed grunts. Shot on grainy, 'you-are-there' digital video, *28 Days Later* has lost none of its unsettling visceral power and sense of despair, remaining a landmark movie in British horror film history. PM



3

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

When George A. Romero set out to make a little horror flick off the back of his day job directing beer commercials in Pittsburgh, he couldn't have known that he was about to change the face of modern horror cinema forever. Shot in black and white with unknown actors for a mere \$112,000, this graphic gut munching masterpiece not only subverted the rules of horror but trashed traditional America values into the bargain, making *Night of the Living Dead* a huge hit with youth audiences in a deeply troubled era. Its siege-based plotline has been a staple in zombie movies ever since. JT



2

SHAUN OF THE DEAD (2004)

With the first and greatest of the Cornetto trilogy, Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg invented a brand new subgenre – the RomZomCom. After making their names with cult sitcom *Spaced*, the pair followed up with this wildly ambitious comedy horror which, as the title suggests, features plenty of their trademark genre referencing (our favourite: Bub's Pizza). Casting *Spaced* alumni such as Nick Frost and Jessica Hynes alongside the likes of Penelope Wilton and the great Bill Nighy, the comedy gradually turns darker, leading to a genuinely scary final act. Albeit one which features the greatest use of a Queen song since *Flash Gordon*! IR





GEORGE A. ROMERO'S

DAWN OF THE DEAD

(1978)

The standard by which all other zombie movies are, and indeed should, be judged.

A nihilistic tragi-comedy with a large dose of social commentary, *Dawn of the Dead* is a thrilling, amusing, scary, moving, intelligent, and exhilarating piece of filmmaking from the man who has come to define the zombie genre more than anyone before or since. George Romero's film has it all and is not only the greatest zombie movie of all time, it is one of the greatest *horror* movies of all time. Actually, sod it, it's one of the greatest movies ever made, in any genre. It really is that good.

So what does this story of four people taking refuge in an abandoned shopping mall in the wake of a zombie plague have to set it above every other film on this list? Firstly, it has terrific action sequences, such as the SWAT team raid on an apartment block that quickly descends into chaos as both civilians and undead are targeted by a police force that loses control. Set in tight, restrictive spaces, both this scene and the later truck sequence demonstrate what a superb technical director Romero is, the rhythm and variation of shots combining to create a sense of disorientation so palpable that you can feel the mounting panic that will soon lead to itchy trigger fingers.

Pathos and poignancy are also in abundance, the shopping mall setting allowing Romero's satirical inclinations full reign. Within that context the zombies become tragic figures,

shadows of ourselves, and the analogy (well worn though it is) seems to become more relevant with each passing decade.

It has some deft characterisation and some rather affecting performances, particularly when it becomes clear that, after the euphoria of claiming the mall for themselves, our heroes come to realise that they are merely indulging in an empty fantasy of unlimited consumption (very much like the admittedly less discerning consumers chomping at the bit outside). Then there's the lashings of gore courtesy of some wonderful special effects work from Tom Savini, a giant of the industry who would go on to perfect his craft with some of his finest work in the sequel, *Day of the Dead* (see number 12).

Dawn of the Dead has audacity in spades, never more clearly demonstrated than in the final act when the group are under assault from all sides. With the drama balanced on a knife edge, Romero, demonstrating the sure footedness of a high wire artist walking on a floor of freshly spilled guts, opts to introduce a custard pie fight when a group of Hell's Angels vroom into view. Given the increasingly bleak developments up to that point this tonal shift shouldn't work but somehow it does, perfectly so, and the audience is soon rooting for the zombies as they begin to turn the tables on the bikers in comical and grotesque fashion.

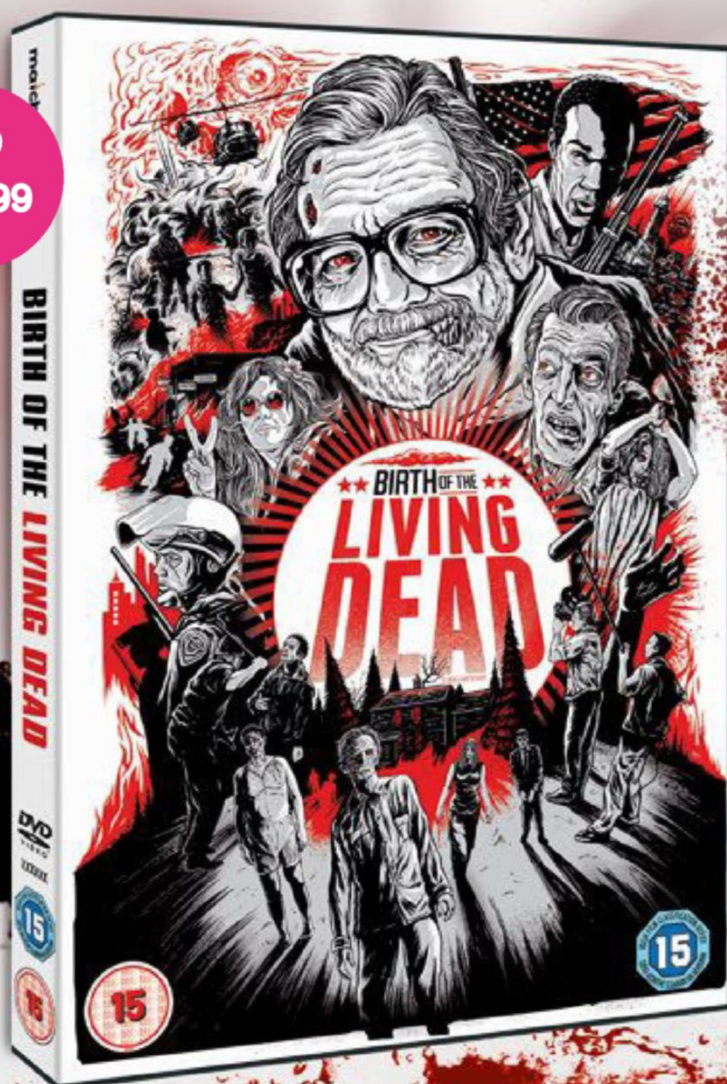
Finally, it has a legacy that is perhaps unequalled in horror cinema, influencing countless creative artists since its release and in the process creating an entire consumer industry that has spawned video games, literature, television series and feature films.

Ironical really, for a satire on consumerism. PB

Words: Phil Beresford (PB), Jack Bottomley (JB), Dominic Cuthbert (DC), Kate Fathers (KF), Ed Fortune (EF), JD Gillam (JG), Joel Harley (JH), Kris Heys (KH), Chris Jackson (CJ), Christian Jones (CMJ), John Knott (JK), Andrew Marshall (AM), Kieron Moore (KM), Paul Mount (PM), Robin Pierce (RP), Andrew Pollard (AP), Luke Riley (LR), Iain Robertson (IR), Jordan Royce (JR), Whitney Scott-Bain (WSB), Daniel Seddon (DS), Nick Spacek (NS), Adam Starkey (AS), Jon Towlson (JT), Martin Unsworth (MU)

"BIRTH OF THE LIVING DEAD IS A MUST WATCH FOR FANS OF THE WORK OF GEORGE A. ROMERO AND ZOMBIE FILMS IN GENERAL" NOS PICTUREHOUSE

DVD
*£9.99



ALSO AVAILABLE
**LIMITED EDITION
DOUBLE BLU RAY PACK**
WITH THE ORIGINAL
**NIGHT OF THE
LIVING DEAD**

matchbox films

**OUT ON DVD
13th OCTOBER**

*DVD only is £9.99

available at

hmv

*While stocks last.

ALIVE AND KICKING

WHEN THERE'S NO MORE ROOM IN DEVELOPMENT HELL!

by Andrew Pollard

In case you've not guessed it already, STARBURST loves it some undead fun! Yes, there's often a lot of dross out there, but there's also some mightily tasty morsels on the horizon for us to get our teeth in to. Here we look at what new zombie efforts will be shuffling their way to the big and small screens in the near future...

RE-ANIMATED FOR MORE

Starting with one of those franchises that just refuses to stay dead, another *Resident Evil* movie is a certainty. Sadly, just when this next instalment will see a release is now up in the air. Star Milla Jovovich recently took to social media to confirm that the rumoured *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter* title is indeed what the sixth film in the series will be known as, although she also broke some more important news. Just as cast and crew were getting set to head over to South Africa to commence production on *The Final Chapter*, Jovovich announced that she and Paul W.S. Anderson, the star's hubby and the franchise's director, are expecting their second child. As a result, *RE6* is now on hold and its planned summer 2015 release has been pushed back indefinitely. Chances are, we'll see Alice's return hit screens in 2016 at some point. Having also penned the movie's script, Anderson has confirmed, as the subtitle suggests, that this sixth movie will be the last in the franchise. Of course,

we've heard that many a time over the years in relation to various film franchises, so take that with a pinch of salt. Still, is there really much more that they can feasibly do with the *Resident Evil* franchise at this point?

In terms of pure spectacle and size, last year's *World War Z* was unlike anything we'd ever seen before – this was zombies on a ridiculous scale. The film itself may not have lived up to what many had hoped for, but it was still undeniably impressive to see such numbers of zombies attacking across the globe, giving Marc Forster's flick both a disaster movie edge to its carnage and almost an espionage thriller element to some of its more subtle moments. With such strong source material to pull from in the form of Max Brooks' work, it's no surprise that a sequel is on the way. The whole *World War Z* thing was initially imagined as a trilogy of films by Paramount. After the first film went over budget and suffered various delays, the plan was to just treat it as a one-off movie adventure, although that quickly changed, largely due to taking home \$540 million across the globe, and a sequel is in development. Very little is known in terms of plot for a second movie apart from that it will pick up the story with Brad Pitt's zombie-bashing former UN worker Gerry Lane.

Depending on which way the powers that be decide to go, we could also see a much extended role for Matthew Fox this time out; his character was the victim of severe cuts and script changes in the first movie. Steven Knight is working on the script for the sequel, which will be helmed by *The Orphanage*'s Juan Antonio Bayona. As far as a release goes, *World War Z 2* is currently aiming for a 2016 release. Additionally, there's talk once more of turning *World War Z* into a multiple-sequel franchise.

On a much smaller scale than

the likes of *Resident Evil* and *World War Z*, Tommy Wirkola's *Dead Snow 2: Red vs. Dead* is hopefully going to get a UK release at some point soon. Having been released in Norway back in February, not to mention playing at various festivals this year, it's hoped that this follow-up to Wirkola's 2009 effort can be viewed by us Brits before the year's out. Similar in humour and gore to the original movie, *Dead Snow 2* picks things up exactly where the first film left off, with Nazi zombies looking to seek vengeance on a small, isolated Norwegian town. Only this time out, the hero of the hour has a Nazi arm stitched on to replace his own severed limb. As huge fans of the first, we've got high hopes for *Dead Snow 2*, with the early reaction to the film seeming to be very positive.

FRESH MEAT

Those who aren't fans of Arnold Schwarzenegger's unique brand of acting have labelled The Governator as dull, lifeless and zombified for many a year. So it comes as no surprise to see Das Arnold now headlining a zombie movie all of his own. In Henry Hobson's *Maggie*, the action icon will be playing Wade, a well-worn farmer who



has to look after his daughter as she slowly transforms into a cannibalistic zombie. Abigail Breslin, known for roles in the likes of *Signs*, *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Zombieland* and *Ender's Game*, is playing the titular role of Maggie in a film that also features *Lady Chatterley's* Joely Richardson and *Smothered's* impressive Amy Brassette. Maggie will get a run out at September's Toronto International Film Festival before it gets a global release in November.

Whereas Maggie has seemingly been in development for an age (Paddy Considine and Chloë Grace Moretz were initially on board instead of Arnold and Breslin), another film that's been stuck in development hell is *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Initially a 2009 novel from Seth Grahame-Smith, the guy behind the *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* book, this tale takes Jane Austen's 1813 classic tale and chucks in a huge dollop of the walking dead. After many false starts the film has finally started shooting, with *Downton Abbey's* Lily James, *Dark Shadows's* Bella Heathcote, *Control's* Sam Riley and *Boardwalk Empire's* Jack Huston all to feature. *Igby Goes Down's* Burr Steers is directing this adaptation and, although no release date is currently known, it's presumed that the film will hit screens late 2015/early 2016.

In a subgenre that often throws up some duds, 2010's *The Dead* was an impressive effort that had its fair share of fans. So much so that a sequel was greenlit. In the can and even shown at some festivals in '13, *The Dead 2: India* is seemingly the victim of some strange delays. The film was initially looking at a release about this time last year, which is when some festival screenings took place, but we're still scratching our heads when asked by people just when we can expect it to see an actual release. The only positive thing is that those who have seen it have praised it, whilst it does seem that a release is imminent, hopefully before 2014 is out. In terms of the action, in case the title didn't give it away, the sequel features an outbreak in densely-populated India. The Ford brothers, Howard and Jonathan, have returned to the helm of this follow-up and here's hoping it sees the light of day sooner rather than later.

Just as this month's *Life After Beth* (reviewed on page 80)



ZOMBEAVERS

throws some humour into the zombie subgenre, it'd also be mighty hard to take a movie called *Zombeavers* seriously in the slightest. Designed to be an action-packed horror comedy affair, Jordan Rubin's first feature directing gig sees a riverside cabin site full of college kids come under attack from a group of vicious beavers who don't give a dam (geddit?) about the usual teen fodder M.O. of sex, alcohol and partying. The film has already had some festival screenings but a UK home release date has yet to be confirmed.

DEAD GOOD GAMES

Now there have unquestionably been some simply stunning zombie movies over the years, but recent years have also seen the undead masses stumble over to the videogame realm. Three particular fan favourites are *The Last of Us*, *Dead Island*, and *Dead Rising*. Whilst these properties have had spin-offs and sequels, the trio are now being adapted as movies. *Dead Island* will be produced by Occupant Entertainment, the guys who produced *All the Boys Love Mandy Lane*, and Deep Silver, the company behind the videogames. The story of the movie, similar to the stunning trailer for the first *Dead Island* game, will apparently centre on a family who go away for their dream vacation only to end up in the middle of a zombie apocalypse. Whilst that's all we really know about that project at this stage, there's a few more details available on the *Dead Rising* adaptation. It was confirmed last month that Zach Lipovsky will be directing the film, although a release date hasn't been confirmed as of yet. Lipovsky most recently helmed *Leprechaun: Origins*, but we're trying to not hold that against him. If the games are anything to go on, *Dead Rising* will be a flat-out survival movie (aren't they all?) that will have its central figures trying to find out what caused the zombie infestation. Additionally, the *Dead Rising* gaming franchise is quite famous for its use of a shopping mall setting at times, so it'll be interesting to see if there's anything



MAGGIE



LIFE AFTER BETH



THE DEAD 2: INDIA



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES



Dawn of the Dead-lite about the flick. Much like *Leprechaun: Origins*, *Dead Rising* is expected to have a straight-to-DVD release.

When it comes to the zombie videogames that have had gore-hounds happily blasting their way through thousands of reanimated corpses in an ever-expanding variety of ways, *The Last of Us* had a lot more to it. Telling an actual story and overflowing with genuine emotional complexity, the game has proved to be a huge success in the way that it was more character-driven and had a stronger narrative than its peers. In some ways, a *The Last of Us* movie doesn't actually feel like it is in any way needed, such is the strength of the story in the game and its expansion packs. Still, it's happening. What is a relief to fans of the videogame and its characters is that the game's chief creative force, Neil Druckmann, is currently penning the movie's script, whilst genre vet Sam Raimi is executive producing. In terms of talent, both Druckmann and Raimi have openly talked about how they are pursuing *Game of Thrones'* Maisie Williams to play Ellie, one of the two central characters of the tale. Merely a teenager in the game, Ellie is escorted across a destroyed American landscape by the older Troy, a character who lost his daughter during the outbreak of the virus years prior. There's no news

just yet on who will be playing Troy, although fan speculation seems to regularly throw up Gerard Butler and Hugh Jackman as possible contenders. No director or release date is known for *The Last of Us* at the time of writing, although Sony and Screen Gems will be handling its distribution.

SMALL SCREEN SHUFFLERS

Whilst videogames are now big business in the undead subgenre, so is TV. How could we not talk about upcoming zombie action without mentioning AMC's rip-roaring success, *The Walking Dead*? You'll be able to find the full details of its fifth year elsewhere in this issue, but there's more to come from this property than just another season. Yes, we're talking about *that* spin-off show. Still without a title, a "companion" show has been long-announced for *The Walking Dead*. The exact details still aren't known yet, but it's been confirmed that this new series will be set in a completely different location than the standard *Walking Dead* show and it won't feature any of the characters from the original show. Executive producer Gale Anne Hurd teased that this companion series will follow just a small group of survivors rather than a large ensemble like *The Walking Dead* currently houses. Then again, *The Walking Dead* started off with a much smaller

cast of key characters, too. Robert Kirkman and Dave Erickson are putting the finishing touches to a script that has just been given the okay at the time of going to press, and the show is currently aiming to premiere on AMC at some point next year.

Now there's no disputing how successful *The Walking Dead* has been, so it comes as no surprise to see a few other zombie-based TV shows on the horizon. First up is *iZombie*, loosely based on DC and Vertigo's comic book series of the same name from Chris Roberson and Michael Allred. The main premise centres on Liv (*The Lovely Bones'* Rose McIver), someone who is turned into a zombie after attending a party one night. Whilst attempting to blend in with the normies as best as possible, Liv also snacks on the brains of the deceased, which gives her an insight into just how these once-alive beings came to be mere corpses. Already confirmed for a season run, *iZombie* will air on The CW towards the turn of the year rather than be one of the many shows that debut this coming October. Taking more of a serious stance than *iZombie* is *Z Nation*, a show already confirmed for a 13-episode run on Syfy. With Harold Perrineau, who will also be appearing in NBC's *Constantine*, heading up the action, *Z Nation* will pick things up three years after a zombie virus has destroyed the United States. Perrineau's character is part of a group tasked with transporting the world's only survivor of a zombie bite from New York to California. Thing is, this survivor has a murky secret all of his own. *Z Nation's* UK release hasn't been announced at the time of going to print, but since it starts in the US this very month, expect it soon.

As we shuffle to the end of this preview piece, we've covered most of the big hitters that are going to be tormenting screens over the coming months and years. With such a plump market out there, we'd like to think there's enough undead menacing going on in the distance to feed the hunger of even the most die-hard of zombie fans. One thing's for sure: brains are very much on the menu for the foreseeable future.

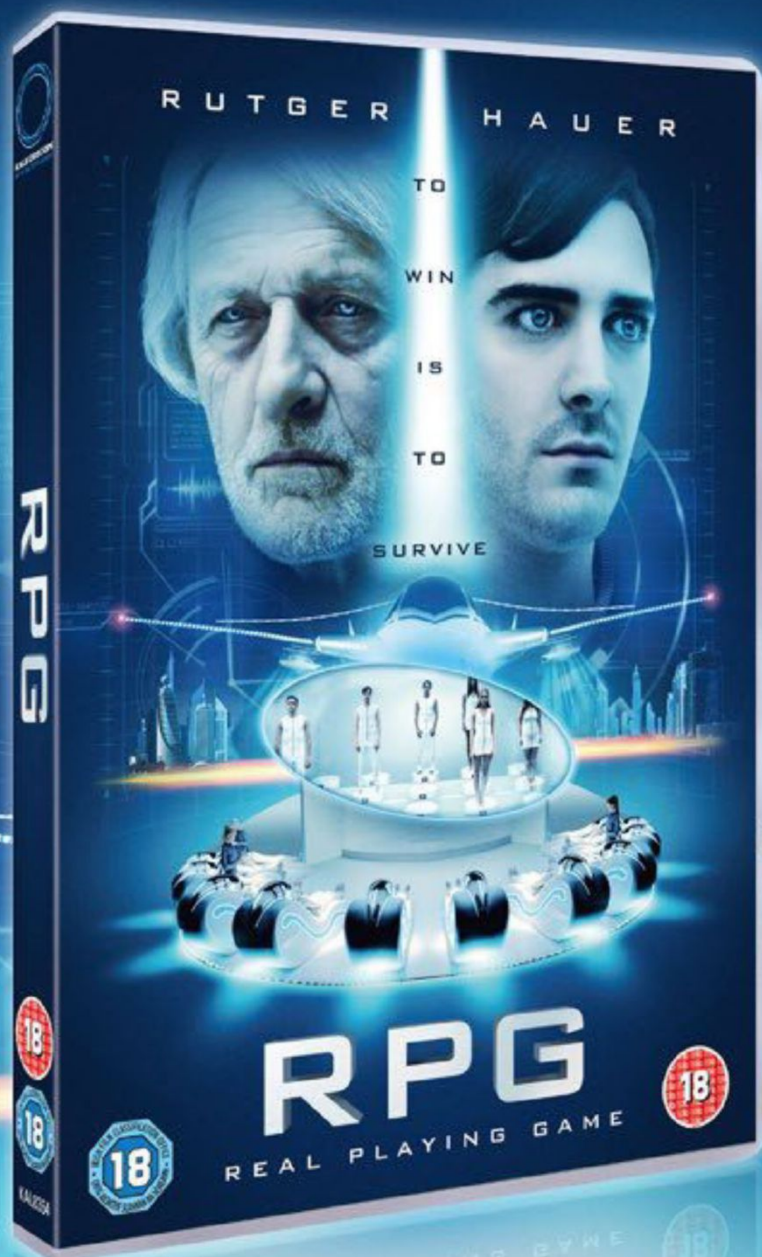
IZOMBIE

Z NATION



RUTGER HAUER

A BATTLE TO THE DEATH
IN A FIGHT FOR ETERNAL YOUTH



OUT NOW
ON DVD

amazon.co.uk

Free Super Saver Delivery and Unlimited One-Day Delivery with Amazon Prime are available on eligible orders. Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



DOCTOR WHO and the Ratings

Doctor Who continues to perform well in the British ratings as the eighth series kicks off its twelve-week run. The eighty-minute debut episode *Deep Breath*, written by showrunner Steven Moffat, achieved an overnight UK audience (including those who viewed on broadcast and those who watched a recording on the day of transmission - known as VOSDAL - viewing on same day as live) of 6.8 million viewers. The final consolidated figure (released ten days after transmission and including all those who watched recordings of the episode within seven days of its initial screening) was an impressive 9.17 million viewers. *Deep Breath* was consequently the second highest-rated TV programme of the week, just behind an edition of BBC Ones's popular midweek cookery competition **The Great British Bake-off** which scored a final rating of 9.28 million. *Deep Breath* scored an Audience Appreciation figure - collated from scores between 1 and 100 awarded by a special panel of 5,000 viewers - of 82. This figure is lower than **Doctor Who**'s normal AI which tends to be around 86, suggesting that at least some of the audience weren't quite won over either by the episode itself or by its new star, twelfth Doctor Peter Capaldi.

Into the Dalek, the second episode of the new series, broadcast on 30th August, saw a troubling drop-off in the overnight figure with a rating of 5.2 million viewers. Part of this decline can be attributed to the fact that ITV launched the latest series of its popular 'talent' search show **The X Factor** at 8pm, thirty minutes into the broadcast of the episode. *Into the Dalek* continued to perform well across the week as the audience found time to watch their recordings of the episode; by Friday 5th September, the consolidated figure had climbed to 7.17 million with a final consolidated figure, due to be released after this issue has gone to press, anticipated to settle at around 7.4 million viewers. *Into the Dalek* saw a rise in the show's AI figure, scoring a more typical 84 from the panel. Both episodes continue to feature prominently on the BBC's own online catch-up iPlayer service - viewers here are not included in the consolidated numbers - with *Deep Breath* still high in the iPlayer Top 40 two weeks after its BBC One screening. Final overall 'reach'

figures for both episodes are likely to be considerably higher than the consolidated numbers.

Whilst some commentators have expressed concern (and, in the case of the 'Popular Press', some glee) over what appears to be a decline in **Doctor Who**'s viewing audience (one 'newspaper' reported the overnight for *Deep Breath* under the headline 'Doctor Few') the series is in many ways setting a benchmark for the way in which the TV viewing experience is subtly changing as more and more catch-up services become available. Few programmes on British TV are now regarded as 'appointment to view' and even the most popular shows are recorded and watched at a time more convenient for their audiences or through one of the numerous catch-up facilities available via TV service providers. Regardless of any perceived drop in **Doctor Who**'s numbers, the fact remains that the show still appears to enjoy a core audience of around 7.5 million, much as it has since it returned in 2005 (bar special episodes and Christmas editions which often rate higher out of audience curiosity). Across the intervening period, audiences for other British TV 'big-hitters' have declined much more sharply, with the 'big three' soap opera titles, **Coronation Street**, **EastEnders** and **Emmerdale**, once apparently unassailably higher in the ratings than **Doctor Who**, now regularly scoring anything between 5 and 7 million viewers per episode. In 2005, when **Doctor Who** returned, **Coronation Street**'s figures were around 13 million, with **EastEnders** at nearly 12 million and **Emmerdale** at over 10 million. If the mighty have indeed fallen, **Doctor Who** isn't yet amongst them.

Doctor Who is also pulling in good numbers in its key overseas markets. *Deep Breath* scored a rating of 2.6 million on BBC America, its highest ever US figure for a series opener. In Canada, where **Doctor Who** is screened by Space, the episode was eventually watched by an audience of 1.4 million following an overnight of 805,000 and in Australia the average audience for its screening on the ABC network was 1.87 million viewers.

Finally, **Doctor Who** has also entered the UK British box office Top Ten for only the second time in its history. *Deep Breath* was screened simultaneously at cinemas around the UK on 23rd August and netted over £500,000, landing it at number eight on the box office chart for the week.

This Month in DOCTOR WHO...

Dates for your diary. This month's **Doctor Who** episodes:

20th September: *Time Heist*
by Stephen Thompson and Steven Moffat

27th September: *The Caretaker*
by Gareth Roberts and Steven Moffat

4th October: *Kill the Moon*
by Peter Harness

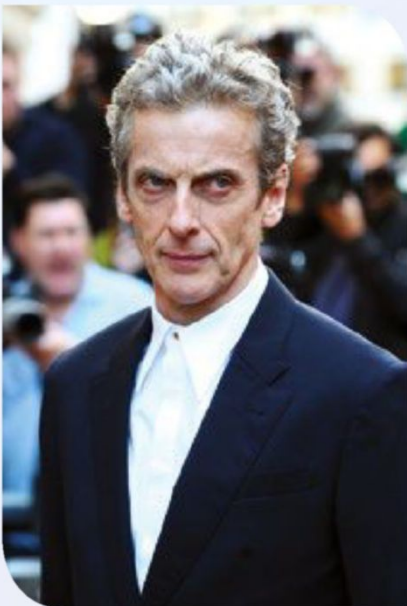
11th October: *Mummy on the Orient Express*
by Jamie Mathieson

18th October - Flatline
by Jamie Mathieson

Dates and transmission times (expected to be around 7.30pm - 7.40pm on BBC One in the UK) are subject to change.

Peter Capaldi - Man of the Year

Twelfth Doctor Peter Capaldi has been awarded the title 'Man of the Year' at the GQ Magazine Awards in London. His co-star Jenna Coleman presented the actor with the award at a bash held at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden in London. "I've been very lucky because in the past I've received awards for my acting," said Capaldi at the ceremony. "This is the first I've received for my personality, which I assume means they've never met me. The reason I've got this award is because I got the chance to play the role of a lifetime twice. Malcolm Tucker in *The Thick of It*. And I also got to play Doctor Who. The real people who know the personality of the year are my family - my mother and my sister and my wife who have put with my personality and endured it to the point that I can get this." Peter Capaldi's **Doctor Who** predecessor, Matt Smith, won the GQ Best Actor award in 2010 and Most Stylish Man award in 2011.



DOCTOR WHO Comes to MINECRAFT

BBC Worldwide last month announced a deal with Microsoft Studios and Mojang which will bring **Doctor Who** to **Minecraft: Xbox 360 Edition**. **Minecraft**, for those not in the know, is a game about breaking and placing blocks. Initially, players built structures to protect against nocturnal monsters but as the game grew, players worked together to create wonderful, imaginative constructs.

From September 2014, **Minecraft** players will have access to a range of **Doctor Who** assets which will allow them to change their avatar to resemble their favourite characters from the show. The first pack – priced at £1.99 – will include a character inspired by the Twelfth Doctor as well as five other Doctors, each of their on-screen companions and some of the Doctor's most well known adversaries including, inevitably, his arch-nemeses, the Daleks.

Rikesh Desai, Digital Entertainment and Games Director at BBC Worldwide UK says "We're constantly looking for new and innovative ways to bring **Doctor Who** content to our loyal fans. Working collaboratively with Microsoft, we've created an exciting new product which will allow **Doctor Who** fans to create their own brand new adventures in the heart of the iconic world of **Minecraft**."

The deal will bring more packs as time goes on, introducing many of the most recognisable characters from the past 50 years of **Doctor Who**. Each skin pack will feature at least six Doctors and will be released regularly following the broadcast of the first episode.

Minecraft is one of the fastest selling Xbox games of all time with over 13 million sales to date. The deal to bring **Doctor Who** to **Minecraft** builds on BBC Worldwide's successful partnership with Microsoft, which has seen Microsoft publish Forza racing games complete with **Top Gear** themed challenges and features. So there.

Book News Update

The BBC's ongoing *Time Trips Doctor Who* e-book series continues this month with *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Time Traveller*. The story is written by award-winning novelist Joanne Harris, best-known for her novel *Chocolat*, which became an Oscar-nominated feature film starring Johnny Depp and Juliette Binoche in 2000. Harris, a lifelong fan of the series, regards third Doctor Jon Pertwee as 'her' Doctor and *Loneliness* is set just before the end of the Pertwee era. "On the point of death after absorbing a vast amount of radiation during his final encounter with the Spider Queen on Metebelis Three, the Third Doctor stumbles out of the TARDIS, searching for Sarah Jane Smith. Instead, he finds himself in an isolated Time Paradox ruled by an unknown psychic force, stuck on Saturday April 8th, and populated by people without names. Anyone disobeying the rules or showing any sign of dissent is swept up into the Gyre. Can the Doctor persuade whatever – or whoever – controls the Gyre to free the Village, before he dies of radiation poisoning?"

The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Time Traveller is available to download now.

WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT THE WHONIVERSE

GUEST COLUMNIST
STEVEN SCHAPANSKY



Ever since the Daleks burst onto the scene in December 1963, their subsequent (and numerous) reappearances in *Doctor Who* have always engendered considerable attention from the press and viewing public alike. Dalek stories have been used to kick off new series, close out others with a bang, and make Christmastime a television event, all with mostly positive results in regards to viewing figures and merchandise sales.

When the show was revived in 2005, one of the most keenly anticipated episodes was the one featuring the Daleks. This was partly because the inclusion of the Doctor's deadliest enemies was in some doubt for a few weeks before production of Series One began, but also because of the world of possibilities potentially opened up by the advent of CGI, and other improvements in television production, since the Daleks' last onscreen appearance in 1988. Viewers, however, would have to wait until episode six of that first thirteen-part series to get

their first full look at the new 21st century model, and even then, the episode, entitled *Dalek*, featured just the sole pepperpot instead of the army that some viewers might have hoped for.

At the time, it might have seemed a more obvious decision to launch the new show with the Doctor facing his deadliest enemies, but the first episode, *Rose*, had had enough to do in resurrecting the series and introducing its characters to a new audience, while still reassuring fans of old that *Doctor Who* was in good hands. In saving *Dalek* until the mid-point of the series, the production team gave themselves a tent pole to give viewers that may have drifted away (after tuning in to see the beginning of the series) a reason to come back and hopefully become hooked. The strategy worked, with a repeat of the publicity blitz of *Doctor Who*'s opening week, and *Dalek* gained more than half a million viewers over the previous episode.

Airing *Dalek* sixth in the run not only

created a "tent pole" to hold up the middle of the series ratings wise, but, dramatically, it planted a pretty big seed for the Daleks' eventual return in the two-part finale. The events prior to *Rose* had only been hinted at by the time of *Dalek*'s transmission. But when the Ninth Doctor confronts what he thinks is the last surviving Dalek, their conversation fills in the back story and provides a sense of closure to all the veiled references heard in earlier episodes. That initial appearance of a singular, war-ravaged Dalek, which then dies at the end of the episode, makes the sight of the Daleks' massive army in *Bad Wolf* that much more shocking. Had the Daleks' first appearance been at the very beginning or at the very end of the series, the impact of seeing that huge fleet of Dalek saucers would almost have been expected.

This "tent pole" philosophy isn't necessarily a new one. It's been a staple on American shows for decades, where broadcasters reliant on advertising plan out

their schedules so that their "big" episodes are airing during the months where, traditionally, more viewers watch TV, the networks then charging advertisers extra to air their commercials during these "sweeps". BBC shows aren't reliant on advertising dollars, but with *Doctor Who* being a weekly series rather than an ongoing serial drama (that could potentially maintain an audience waiting for an eventual dramatic payoff), it still needs to keep as many pairs of eyes staring at as many TV screens as possible.

Using *Dalek* as a mid-series spike set a trend that continued right through the next three series of the Russell T Davies era. Another classic enemy, the Cybermen, were brought back midway through Series Two, the first episode of that story scoring some of the highest viewing figures of the year, while Series Four saw perhaps the most overt attempt at scheduling a "marquee" episode, with Russell T Davies even stating in press interviews that *The Doctor's Daughter* was designed almost to try and prop up viewing figures.

However, this last example perhaps shows the downside of this kind of scheduling. Although a ratings hit, *The Doctor's Daughter* was blatantly structured as a "must see" episode, its plot contrivances ultimately something of a disappointment in the execution, and these manufactured ratings bubbles were also often short lived. It is a sad irony that many of the later series episodes were among the very best, yet pulled in the most meagre viewing figures. *The Empty Child*, *The Impossible Planet*, *Blink* and *Silence in the Library* are all modern classics which reached lower than average audiences.

Things have changed since Steven Moffat came on board as showrunner in 2010. After staying the RTD course for his first series, an unbroken thirteen-episode run that introduced Matt Smith as the Doctor, Moffat (possibly at the BBC's behest, or at the very least with their blessing) completely changed how *Doctor Who* would be presented to the viewing public for the foreseeable future. By splitting Series Six



into two halves – seven episodes in the spring of 2011, six more in the autumn – Moffat explained that there would, in effect, be two series premieres and two series finales that year. Not only would this allow for a more tightly contained dramatic arc, but it would also serve as a more palatable run of episodes for the casual viewer to digest. Instead of devoting thirteen straight weeks to an ongoing story, viewers might feel more compelled to stick with a show if they knew they only had to watch for a handful of episodes at a time. This approach was repeated for Series Seven, with Amy and Rory Pond's final episodes creating a five-episode arc in the autumn of 2012, followed by a further block of eight in the spring of 2013 to introduce the Doctor's new companion, Clara. This split-series aesthetic – doubling the marquee value of a normal run of thirteen episodes – can be directly traced back to the decision to hold off on the Daleks' reintroduction, thereby maximising its publicity value, in 2005.

This isn't necessarily a new idea in

Doctor Who either, with the fourteenth series taking a five-week break over Christmas 1976, the departure of a much-loved companion followed by a visit to the legendary home planet of the Time Lords at one side of the split, and the debut of a striking new companion at the other. The BBC even announced *The Face of Evil* as the beginning of a new series when it began on New Year's Day 1977, a young Steven Moffat no doubt watching at home. And earlier in the decade, producer Barry Letts (an early advocate of the strong curtain-raising story as well as the series finale, as *The Three Doctors* and *The Green Death* will attest) was not averse to dropping a Dalek story into the middle of a series in order to generate another spike in the viewing figures.

Ratings-wise, Moffat's "twin peaks" approach has been perhaps more successful than Davies' mid-series tent pole, with Series Six and Seven less susceptible to the peaks and valleys that befell the previous five years of *Doctor Who*. Once online and repeat viewing figures (which have become a much bigger factor than during the previous regime) were factored in, the last two Moffat series have proven to be very successful indeed. The current series, however, is once again an unbroken run (albeit of a dozen episodes rather than the usual thirteen, but with an almost double-length opener to compensate), scheduled as such to allow viewers to grow accustomed to Matt Smith's replacement. Will a new Doctor in a longer series aired during the darker autumn evenings (Steven Moffat's preferred timeslot) help shake the mid-series ratings lull? And if so – or even, indeed, if not – will this same format be continued into 2015, the tenth anniversary of the series' return to our screens? As with most things *Doctor Who*, only time will tell.

Steven Schapansky hosts the Radio Free Skaro podcast at www.radiofreeskaro.com

ART: ANDY LAMBERT



REVIEWS

NEW WHO RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



WALLOWING IN OUR OWN WELTSCHMERZ

AUTHOR: ANDY DAVIDSON, CHRIS ORTON, ANDREW ORTON, ROBERT HAMMOND, MATTHEW WEST / PUBLISHER: MIWK / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Few eras – oh, all right, no eras – of Doctor Who are as divisive amongst the show's aficionados as the dying years of the 1980s. Sylvester McCoy became the seventh Doctor in 1987 after the unceremonious dumping of Colin Baker and the show limped on for three more brief series before the BBC finally turned off the life support in 1989. A hardcore group of fans maintain that McCoy's era was the beginning of a new 'golden age'

in the show's history, signifying a creative turnabout in its fortunes unfortunately not mirrored in the BBC's own attitudes towards a show they'd long since considered well beyond its sell-by date. Others – naming no names – have little or no time for the show's last three series and some – naming no names – might even take the view that not only should all tapes of the episodes themselves be buried forever deep in a sea of peat but also that the memory of having ever seen them should be surgically removed from the brains of all those who suffered at the time – or even since.

Weltschmerz isn't, thankfully, a hectoring 'you are wrong, this is why it's good' text book chronicling the show's perceived last-minute renaissance. Written by the team behind the popular and irreverent 1990s Auton fanzine, Weltschmerz is the work of admirers of the era who aren't blind to its faults. The McCoy era is dissected and its illogicality, irrationalities and its downright inanities are laid bare for the world to see. Weltschmerz asks how and why the Rani built her cliff-side base on Lakertya in McCoy's rancid debut serial 'Time and the Rani', how her four-eyed slaves the Tetrapods could be kitted out with spectacles, why 'Paradise Towers' needed so many Caretakers and how its inept rebel Kangs evolved. Also of concern is why the CIA would employ two bumbling comedy spies to track down a rogue satellite in the pitiful 'Delta and the Bannermen' and why, having waited thousands of years to

exact vengeance upon his people. In 'Dragonfire', Kane chose the very moment the Doctor arrives on iceworld Svartos to put his revenge plan into motion.

McCoy's twelve serials – plus his appearances in the 1993 Children in Need special 'Dimensions in Time' and the 1996 Paul McGann TV movie – are subject to similar outrageous scrutiny and generally found wanting. But there's the sense that this is all being done with tongue firmly in cheek and a real sense of affection for the source material. It's not for the faint-hearted; the humour's often not just near the knuckle, but occasionally halfway up the arm and sometimes the Auton boys wander off on some fanciful frolic in their attempt to make sense of stories which clearly have the capacity to fall to bits with the application of even the most basic principles of logic. But we'd wager that a similar approach might reap similar results if applied to even the better-regarded eras of Doctor Who's long history.

Weltschmerz is silly, smutty and seriously unnecessary. It's also frequently very funny indeed, and with all proceeds going to Alzheimer's Society it's got to be deserving of a place on any Doctor Who fan's bookshelf, alongside all those monster picture books and chunky anniversary celebrations volumes. It's honeypotterific.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



DOCTOR WHO: THE TENTH DOCTOR #2

WRITER: NICK ABADZIS / ARTIST: ALICE X. ZHANG, ELENA CASAGRANDE / PUBLISHER: TITAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

You may remember our review of the first issue in Titan's new Tenth Doctor comic series. We weren't very kind to it (indeed, we were only one or two stars away from a complete hatchet job), but it's great to see that the second issue is a huge improvement from all concerned.

This part of the tale sees the Doctor, having taken on feisty young Gabriella Gonzalez as a temporary companion, investigating the cause of recent weird events surrounding the Day of the Dead. We get the feeling that this would work quite well as a televised story, with its visuals of portals exploding forth from washing machines. The monster is also great and seems like the kind of CGI thing that would fit right in with modern Doctor Who and what it's doing these days.

While the artwork in the previous issue was generally a cut above that in the Eleventh Doctor's first issue (although that wasn't a terribly high bar to get over), the art here stands out as being even better

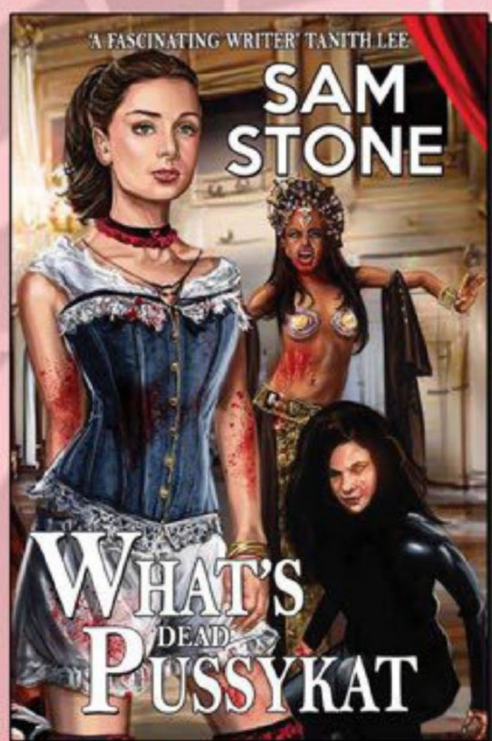
than before. In most panels, the Doctor actually looks like David Tennant this time, as opposed to the generic model that he resembled before.

The story flows a lot better this time around, although we stand by our feeling that Gabriella's entrance could have been held back to the first couple of pages of this one (especially as we have to sit through her introducing herself to the Doctor when we've already met her). Now that the backstory is out of the way, the writers can concentrate on moving the plot forward and this is the strongest part of the issue. They've got a fun concept here and it'll be great to see where they take it in future issues, although it does of course remain to be seen whether the storytelling will be better in subsequent volumes or whether this is as good as it gets.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★★ 7

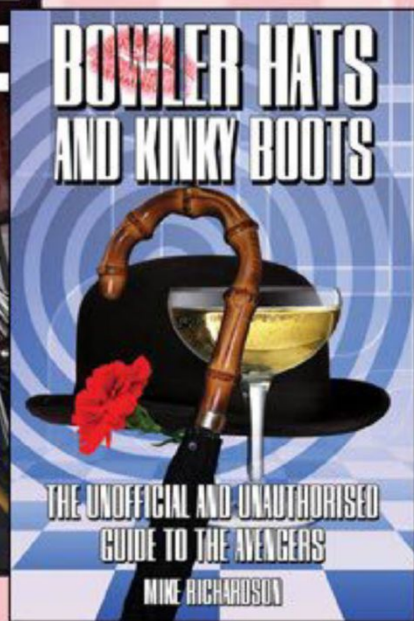
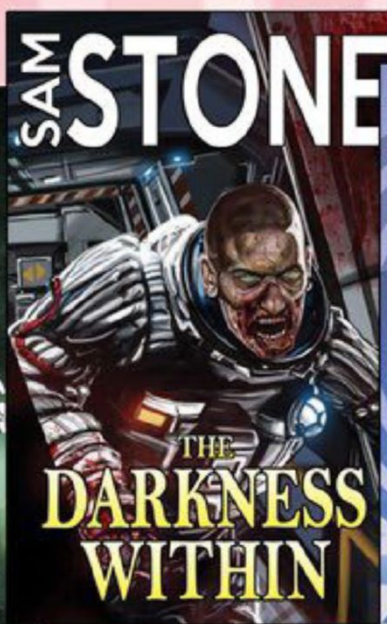
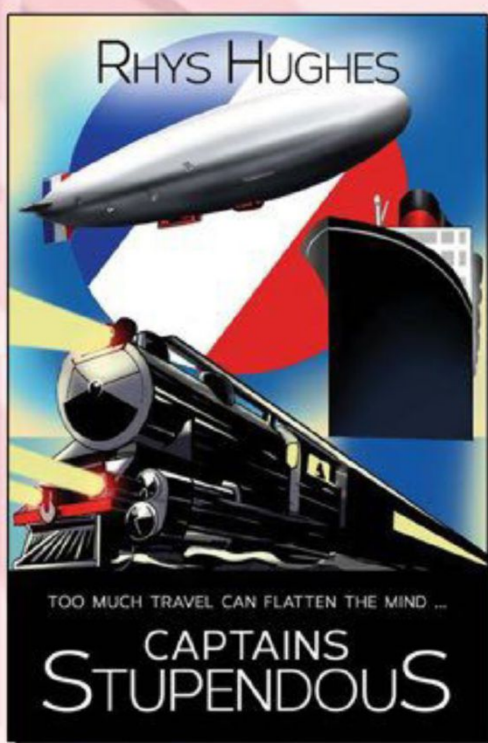
WORDS OF WONDER



Available now: *WHAT'S DEAD PUSSYKAT* (£12.99 978-1-84583-098-4), a tale of vampires, gargoyles, faith and farce from the author of *Zombies at Tiffany's* and *Kat on a Hot Tin Airship*.

Other titles include *CAPTAINS STUPENDOUS* (£12.99 978-1-84583-886-7), a brilliant slice of thought-provoking and engaging fiction from the master, Rhys Hughes.

We have many other cult television and film titles available - visit the website for sale prices!



Also available for pre-order: Sam Stone's *JINX TOWN* (£12.99 978-1-84583-096-0) - The first in a trilogy of high-impact science-fiction horror novels. One woman battles to survive when an aggressive alien race invades the world, leaving destruction in their wake, and stealing the womenfolk back to their own planet via a powerful and space-bending portal.

TO OBTAIN COPIES OF ANY TELOS TITLES, PLEASE VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.TELOS.CO.UK FOR WORLDWIDE ORDERING BY CREDIT CARD OR PAYPAL.

TELOS
PUBLISHING

KING GEORGE

Words: Ed Fortune

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN needs little introduction. The American novelist and screenwriter is best known for his *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE* series, the international best seller which inspired hit TV show *GAME OF THRONES*. His work also includes *WILD CARDS*, *FEVRE DREAM* and the 1987 TV series, *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*. A veteran of the Worldcon scene and a multiple Hugo award winner, we caught up with him at Loncon 3 to find out what he was up to...

STARBURST: Last time we talked to you, the *Game of Thrones* TV series had only recently begun. How has your life changed since?

George R.R. Martin: The TV series conquered the world. That's been a big change. The show is everywhere and the books have been translated into over 40 languages. I don't know how many countries the TV show has aired in but it has become a global phenomenon. It's a change in degree rather than kind; the books were bestsellers before, but now they're mega bestsellers. It's made a great change in my life because it's made me a celebrity, which is something I have decidedly mixed feelings about, but it comes with the territory so I'm doing my best to adjust to that.

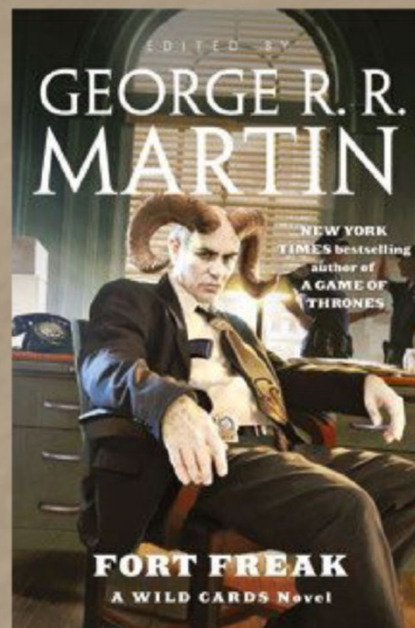
You do have an impressive back-catalogue of work. How does it feel to be famous for just one thing?

Oh, I laugh about it sometimes. People seem to think that I had never written anything before *Game of Thrones*, or

they're unaware of it. Of course I had more than twenty years of novels, short stories and television scripts before I got into *Game of Thrones*. It's one of those cases where I've worked 40 years to become an overnight success!

You've been described by some, including Neil Gaiman, as a murderer of characters. How have you responded to this newly acquired reputation?

The truth is I've always killed my characters. Look back on my history as a writer; I began writing for comic fanzines, little amateur superhero stories because I'm a comic book fan. In high school I was writing for the old mimeograph comic fanzines of the 1960s. I think about the third or fourth story I published was called the *Strange Saga of the White Raider*, and the White Raider was a superhero on skis. He skied into action in the cold North. That was something that I wrote when I was 13 or 14 years old and the White Raider dies at the end of that story. So even then I was killing characters!

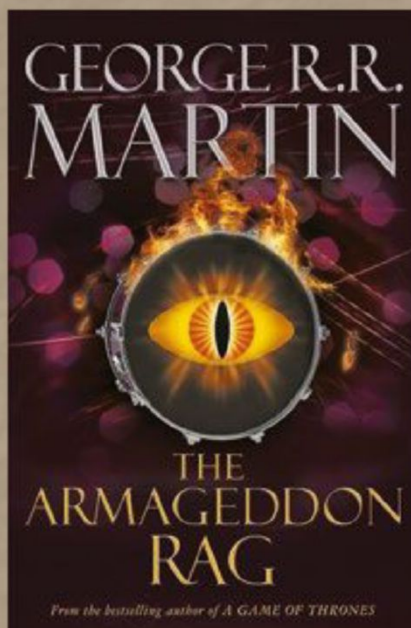




How did the *Wild Cards* novels influence your later work?

The *Wild Cards* mosaic novels were partially structured from some of the lessons I'd learned in television about actor breaks and how to weave many storylines together. *Wild Cards* is not my work alone, I've been the editor since 1987 since we started. I have a wonderful assistant editor in Melinda Snodgrass and we have over forty writers who have contributed to *Wild Cards*. My job there was to be the conductor of the orchestra and get people to sing the same song and weave various plots through each other; [it was] a challenging job. When I began doing *A Song of Ice and Fire*, that was four or five years after *Wild Cards* and I remember thinking at the time that I was going to structure this like a *Wild Cards* mosaic novel but instead of seven writers, I'll write all of the characters. In that sense I'm a one-man band, where *Wild Cards* was a symphony orchestra.

The other genre that's big at the moment is urban fantasy. Would you say your book,



Armageddon Rag, is an early example of this new wave?

No, I wouldn't say that. We have to be careful about that term because there was a subgenre called urban fantasy back in the '80s that came primarily out of Minnesota and a whole group called Scribbles, and they were writing about elves and occult creatures, mostly living in Minneapolis, interacting with human beings. A lot of it was drawn from Celtic fantasy. *The Borderlands* series was an important part of it. That type of urban fantasy died out. This new subgenre arose which is also called urban fantasy but I think is very different. It's more women dressed in leather with tramp stamps fighting werewolves and vampires who are living amongst us. I don't think *Armageddon Rag* really has much to do with either of those.

What's next after you've finished writing the *Game of Thrones* series?

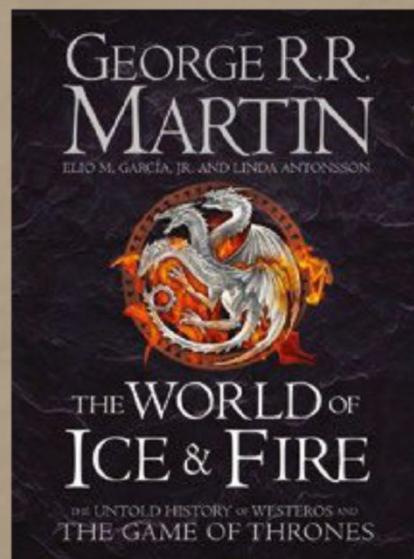
There's a lot of things I could do. Firstly I still have two gigantic books left in the mainline *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. That doesn't mean I'm through with Westeros. There's the fake history book which I've been jokingly referring to as the Grimarillion that is largely half written, with material written that was originally prepared as side-bars for the *World of Ice and Fire* which comes out in October. I want to finish that book, I've got a lot of great material there but I've probably got an equal amount still to write in order to complete that book. I also have these two prequel characters, Dunk and Egg; I've written three stories about them but there are many more adventures that they have along the way. I need to write another seven stories to complete them. I want to write a *Wild Card* novel of my own at some point. I want to do more with Haviland Tuf, I want to write a sequel to *Fevre Dream*. I want to complete my unfinished and infamous Jack the Ripper novel, *Black and White* and

Red All Over. There are a million things that I could do and I have no idea whether I'll do any of them! By the time I finish *Ice and Fire* I may have a dozen new ideas that will seem more enticing to me. These are ideas that I have been carrying for a long time, so I just hope I live to 110 so I get to write all of them.

What advice would you give to a 16-year-old who's currently writing Tony Stark/Ned Stark fanfic?

Well the first advice I'd give them is stop writing fanfiction, at least as it's presently constituted. As a young comic book fan I wrote 'fanfiction' as we called it in the 1960s, like the *Strange Saga of the White Raider*, but I wasn't borrowing anybody else's characters. I gave him his backstory and I invented the world he was in and the people he was fighting. Fanfiction in those days was fiction written by fans published in fanzines. Now fanfiction seems to have taken on a very specific and narrower meaning - borrowing other people's characters and other people's worlds and writing unauthorised fannish material about Iron Man or Ned Stark or Harry Potter, you name it. In my mind that's not good preparation for being a writer. You need to do it all to be a writer; you need to create a world and create your own characters, rather than borrow other peoples. Not doing the world building or the character creation, that's like trying to get in shape by training only your right hand. Aspiring writers should start with short stories, write those stories and send them out to market. Collect those first rejection slips - it's always hard when you get those first rejections - and learn to take rejection because you're going to get plenty of it as a writer. And keep going.

THE WORLD OF ICE AND FIRE will be released in hardcover on October 28th. The sixth novel in the *A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE* series, *THE WINDS OF WINTER*, is currently expected early 2016.



THE DEVIL INSIDE

by Andrew Pollard

French filmmaker
ALEXANDRE AJA

burst onto the genre scene with 2003's brilliant **SWITCHBLADE ROMANCE** (otherwise known as **HAUTE TENSION** in its native country, and **HIGH TENSION** in the States). From helming one of the best horror films of the last few decades, Aja then switched his attention to remakes of **THE HILLS HAVE EYES**, **MIRRORS**, and **PIRANHA**, and he's now back with the Daniel Radcliffe-starring **HORNS**. We got the chance to chew the fat with Aja, covering his latest movie, his arrival in the horror genre, those Hollywood remakes, doomed sequels, the impressive-sounding **SPACE ADVENTURE COBRA**, and much, much more...



ALEXANDRE AJA

STARBURST: *Horns* is adapted from the novel of the same name by Joe Hill, son of Stephen King. How familiar were you with the source material before you signed on for the film?

Alexandre Aja: I had a chance to read that book when I was finishing *Piranha*, and I quickly fell in love with it. I was just reading chapter after chapter, going through such a different range of genre; going from the most emotional drama to the most dark and funny satire of America to the horrific elements. Everything centred around this great trauma of Ig Perrish going through hell. Once I'd finished the first chapter, I knew I had to make a movie of this. After *Piranha*, it was like somehow an all-committing satire on America, this one was just like another possibility to do a very unique portrait of the American society that Joe Hill was offering, then taking the opportunity to take it further and do something very interesting.

To file the story into a certain genre is near-impossible, but how did you end up adapting the book? Did somebody approach you or was it something you actively hunted down?

As soon as I finished the book I tried to get the rights, but another producer had got there before me, so I said, "I absolutely want to make this movie." I could see, reading it, exactly how to make it. At first Shia LaBeouf was attached, then later she [the producer] contacted me to say Shia was gone and she offered me the possibility of developing the script for them, and that was the beginning of the adventure. That's when I spent a year with a scriptwriter. One of us was writing, one of us was scripting, and we were completely taking from the book. The book, for me, was the most important thing.

And were there any parts of the book that you had to cut for any reason, such as budget or time constraints?

It was the time constraints, mostly, because I didn't have time to shoot. I didn't want to cut the edge because the book is so well written and crazy. The only thing we could do was to do a 6-hour movie. We had to cut a few things, so we had to find an amazing way to combine the narration and elements that we had, but there was some of the past, some of the future, that we couldn't... it was just too long.

Was there any point where you thought about doing it as a two-part movie?

Y'know, someone asked me that a few weeks ago, about whether I could do a series of films or a TV series based on the book. It's a great question. But at the time, three years ago, the big TV series were not there yet. A two-part movie, I would've loved to do that. I would've loved to be able to have more script time to evolve the story, like making a feature film and extending the two hours, but I had to deal with that.

You talked about Shia LaBeouf being on board at one point, but Daniel Radcliffe ended up getting the Ig role. Now that's a guy who so many are going to struggle to associate with anything but Harry Potter, much like the famed 'curse of Superman' for George Reeves and Christopher Reeve, but

he is absolutely brilliant here. How hands-on were you in casting Daniel?

When I got on board, Shia was gone. Reading the book, I was wondering who can play Ig - I was so involved and the book felt so personal to me, so I was picturing someone from my generation, but I was wrong. I was kinda thinking who from this new generation, and then I was contacted by Daniel, who'd read the book and was in love with the book and absolutely wanted to make the movie, and for me, at the time, it was before *Woman in Black* and I didn't have the chance to see him on stage, so for me he was Harry Potter, and I love Harry Potter, but it was very tough for me to imagine him in anything else. We started talking, and I realised, looking at him, it was the first time that something like that happened to me, where I was talking to him and I realised he was Ig Perrish, in the way of talking, in the way of absolute commitment, and of someone who is completely committed - he is absolute and he's a real romantic person.

When I say romantic, I'm not saying it in a cheesy, naïve way, I'm talking more about the philosophical aspects of it, which means he's living every single aspect of life, the most extreme and complete version of it. We were talking about love, revenge and life, and he was all the different aspects of the character. In addition to that, he was bringing something unique to the movie; he was bringing a proximity to that character. The story is so crazy and so out there, you have to have someone like him, who everyone feels like they know and they feel very close to. People feel for him and identify with him. Looking back at the book, he has that moment where Ig and Merrin are talking about one day when they have kids and they talk about one day meeting Harry Potter. He was the obvious choice. And the comedic side of it, he has the potential that people don't realise yet. What I'm taking from the experience is I will cast him in everything I'm doing because he's an amazing person to work with and an amazing actor. I think people don't realise that *Harry Potter* was only the beginning and he has a lot ahead of him. And what he's done so far, it's always different, it's always surprising.

Now you did *Furia* back in 1999, but you got really introduced to people in 2003 with *Haute Tension*, which is generally regarded as one of the best horrors of the last 20 years. That movie, when it came out, there



Daniel Radcliffe and Juno Temple, *HORNS*



Heather Graham, *HORNS*

was a lot of press and coverage around it. How was it to be caught up in all of that so relatively young in your career?

To tell you the truth, I was very happy. Yes, I was pretty young - I think I was 24 when it got released - but the truth was, I'd made *Furia* before, which was finished in '99, when I was 20, and that movie was like a sci-fi romance story, very low-budget movie, with Marion Cotillard... the only great thing from that movie is the music, and Brian May from Queen did the soundtrack. *Furia* was a total failure in the commercial sense of things; no one saw it! I was losing the hope or want to make another movie one day, and it took me four years to come back with *Haute Tension*. So when that found its audience, there were absolutely no movies in France - even in the rest of the world, it was before *Cabin Fever*, it was before the new generation of filmmakers. I was not hoping for the movie to be that successful, but it came like a blessing - *Haute Tension* was my passport to the U.S. My life would be very different without it.

After that film you moved on to *The Hills Have Eyes*. What were the different pressures of handling a big Hollywood remake?

Wes Craven is one of the first people I met when I arrived in L.A. ten years ago. He'd seen *Haute Tension* and he asked if I knew of *The Hills Have Eyes* - of course I'd heard



Cécile De France, HIGH TENSION (2003)



of *The Hills Have Eyes* – and he said he'd been thinking of remaking it. At the time, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* remake had not been released yet, the *Dawn of the Dead* remake had not been released yet either, so it was like the beginning of that remake frenzy. So I saw it was an amazing opportunity for us, seeing as our favourite movie of all time was *Deliverance*. So to use the great story Wes had created and upgrade it to this movie and just make it a different kind of movie, a real survival kind of movie, that was how it started. At the time, we had a lot of proposition, me and my producing and writing partner, we were offered lots of movies to do right away. But we were scared to just be a director, we were scared to lose our control. It's a totally different system to what you have in France, so we decided not to take a movie right away, we decided to take something that we could write – so we took *The Hills Have Eyes* and spent a year on the script. And it got made, the movie was a success, which was a great place for us to start and to show we can control all that we were doing. Since then we've managed to keep most of the writing, and producing as well, so in a way we tried to find a good balance to work in the studio system. So far, so good, touching wood.

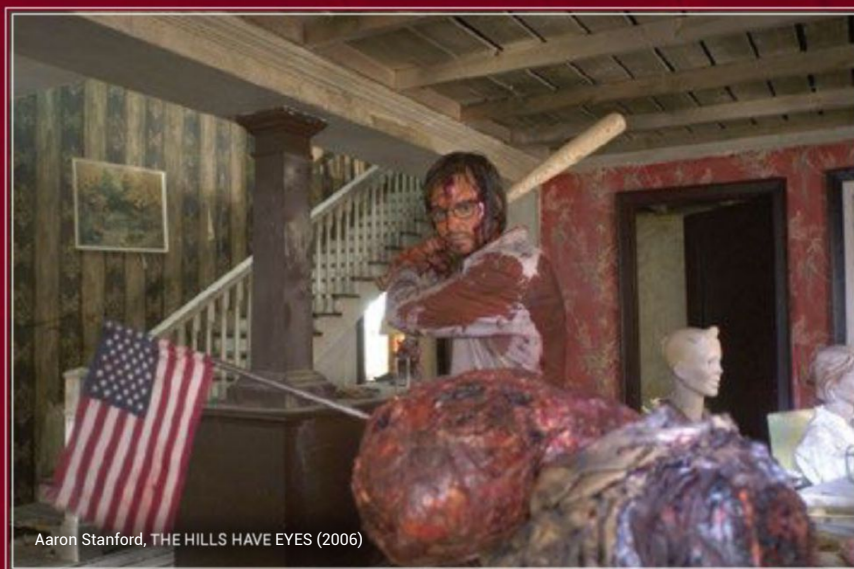
So Wes Craven approached you then?

Yeah, Wes brought the project to me and he also produced the project. It's always better

to have the blessing of the people who did the original movie. But I got the vibe, I could feel that rather than *The Last House on the Left* or on *Elm Street*, that Wes had some regrets on *The Hills Have Eyes*. It was not exactly the movie that he wanted to make, so some of that remake was for him. Us working together was about creating a new version that was closer to what he wanted to do at the time.

You moved on from *The Hills Have Eyes* to *Mirrors* and then to *Piranha*, which was a really enjoyable, fun film that seemed to be aimed at people who grew up on '70s and '80s horror movies. What was your mission objective when you come on board *Piranha*? *Piranha* was one of the first scripts I read when I arrived in L.A. At the time the movie wasn't even called *Piranha*, it was called *Lake Havasu*, and I kind of loved it. The script was completely campy but like the whole spring break under attack – I thought it was a really fun ride. But I didn't really get along

with the producers at the time, then time passed and I did *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Mirrors*. Then I got contacted by Dimension saying that at one point, four or five years ago, you were interested in *Piranha*. I said that I thought it was a great story, and I started talking about the funny parts of the movie, and I looked at their faces and their faces told me that they didn't have any idea of what I was talking about. Basically we were talking about very different projects, so I realised at that point that the same script I'd read went to different writers for five years, meaning everything that I loved about the project disappeared – the spring break had gone, the campiness has gone, the fun had gone. My job, as a director, at that point was to say let's go back to the original script, let's rewrite the original script – which we did for almost two years – and let's do this 'Girls Gone Wild', spring break under attack. You cannot make a serious movie about piranha. So that's what I did. I just wanted to make this movie before I turned 30. I wanted



Aaron Stanford, THE HILLS HAVE EYES (2006)

to make a movie where there's more blood than anyone else had ever used before. I wanted that gore-fest, that blood-fest. And that's what we did, we had a lot of blood!

Were you ever attached at any point to come back to do *Piranha 3DD*?

Yeah, you know I have a funny story about that. I had made three movies in the U.S. - *The Hills Have Eyes*, *Mirrors*, and *Piranha* - that have had really bad sequels that I was absolutely not involved with. They started with *The Hills Have Eyes 2*, which I had nothing to do with, then *Mirrors 2*, which I had nothing to do with, then *Piranha 2* or *Piranha 3DD*. The thing is, for *The Hills Have Eyes* and for *Piranha*, twice we had ideas for a sequel, twice we had full ideas that we wanted to do after. For *The Hills Have Eyes*, the story that we wanted to make was different to the one that Wes wanted to make - Wes wanted to do his own story for the sequel. For *Piranha*, I think that the one that we wanted, Dimension was really excited about it but it was way too expensive. We wanted to go to Thailand and do a full moon party, like the biggest kind of spring break event in the world and turn it into people getting attacked. But it was too expensive, so I had nothing to do with any of those "amazing" sequels [laughs].

Looking ahead, *Space Adventure Cobra* has been announced. What can you tell us about that?

Space Adventure Cobra has been in the works for a few years now. I grew up reading and watching *Cobra*, as many, many people did in France and Japan and most of the world. It's a super-expensive project, a space adventure movie. It costs a lot of money, so to make it happen we need to have the right cast. It might take some time, but I really hope that we can make it happen soon.

So it's safe to say that this is the most ambitious project that you've been involved in then?

Yeah, it's definitely my dream project. This is something that I absolutely want to do

Kiefer Sutherland, *MIRRORS* (2008)



- I will drop anything if it is ready to go. I need the right tools to make the best space adventure movie.

All being well with the script coming together, getting the cast you want, the budget you want, when should we be expecting that to hit?

We're looking at the cast, and if we find the cast then we'll see, but it's all about the cast. Hopefully it's no later than three years.

And what else do you have in your sights for after *Cobra*?

I'm looking and reading a lot of stories, reading a lot of different scripts. Right now I'm looking at something that might happen soon - very, very soon - which could be shooting next winter. I'm still working in the genre, looking at this amazing French graphic novel called *Les Sentinelles*. Then I'm writing the *Scanners* TV show right now. There is a lot of things and a lot of projects that I want to make. I don't want to

find myself repeating the same thing - it's exciting to do something that you've never done before.

Having made your name in horror, is there any worry from your point of view that you may get pigeonholed by certain quarters?

Yes, but I'm very happy and very proud to be a part of that kind of 'Splatpack' of horror filmmaker. But I think the next few years are going to be very different, with *Space Adventure Cobra*. I love making movies and telling stories, and stories are the most important thing for me; the only thing I want to do. I just want to find the stories that appeal to me - they can be very scary or very funny or very sad. What I like is when a story's strong enough to make you actually feel that you're not watching something.



Alexandre Aja's *HORNS* hits cinemas on October 31st and will be reviewed next issue.

Jessica Szohr, *PIRANHA 3D* (2010)



CAROLINE PREECE

The Girl From

PLANET

X



THOR #1 COVER BY ESAD RIBIC

Gender-swapped characters were once thought of as belonging purely to the realm of fan fiction, in which writers could make various romantic entanglements or character motivations easier to achieve by switching from male to female or vice versa, but the idea has been slowly getting credence in the mainstream.

In July, it was announced that Marvel Comics were introducing a female Thor – not “She-Thor”, “Lady Thor” or “Thorita”, but the one and only occupant of the costume and owner of the hammer.

The comings and goings of character iterations in the land of comics doesn't usually, sadly, catch the attention of mainstream news outlets, newspapers and such, but something about this announcement got tongues wagging. This was obviously by design, with Marvel making the announcement on *The View* in the US.

What did this mean? Would we be getting a female Thor film before Wonder Woman, with DC being notably slow off the mark in creating a platform for its most notable heroine? Marvel has become such an entertainment juggernaut that it's hard not to wonder what this news means for the cinematic universe.

Marvel have been quick to dismiss claims that this is a stunt designed to get attention, before usual service is resumed at some point in the near future, with Editor Wil Moss explaining: “This new Thor isn't a temporary female substitute – she's now the one and only Thor, and she is worthy!”

Those who've glanced over this column in the past will know how frustrated I've been about the lack of female representation in the now world-conquering comic book movie genre, with TV only just picking up

the slack and films still showing no sign of addressing the gross imbalance.

But this, a female superhero introduced as a legitimate leading lady, replacing the previously male member of Marvel's “big three” no less, is good news for everyone. It's good news for female comic book readers especially, but also anyone searching for a bit of variety in their entertainment.

But change isn't everyone's favourite thing, of course, especially with characters as established and beloved as Thor, but it is a necessary part of storytelling when a single character is taken over several years or even decades. It's akin to the introduction of Miles Morales, a half-black, half-Latino character, as Spider-Man a few years ago. Not everyone was a fan, but Marvel went ahead with it anyway and the world didn't end.

A lot of people attributed that particular move to the changing mood in regards to movie casting wish-lists, with *Community* star and general uber-nerd Donald Glover getting an unprecedented amount of support for the role of Peter Parker in Marc Webb's *Amazing Spider-Man* series before Andrew Garfield was eventually cast. Morales wasn't the first non-white superhero, but it got a reaction nonetheless.

It was a debate dragged up again when the young, diverse cast of the new *Fantastic Four* movie was announced, with Michael B Jordan's casting as Johnny Storm getting the most attention, both positive and negative. Looking back at it now, it appears that no one knew quite how to react, with the argument against a black member of the Storm family just as confused and unclear as the argument for.

We obviously have to be careful not to champion this new iteration of Thor just because she's a woman – she might be a terrible character – but it's the decision to move forwards with her that is the most interesting part of the story right now. Marvel's movie output is currently such a big part of their brand that it's hard to imagine it wasn't in the back of their minds when those meetings were taking place.

And it was something their audience were also thinking about, with Chris Hemsworth jokes flying about on Twitter almost as soon as the news hit the internet. It's not an entirely crazy notion – Chris Evans has already teased his departure from the titular role of *Captain America*, and it's unlikely that the character will be retired along with him. Could we be looking at a more even male-female ratio in a few years?

It pains me to admit, but it's not a

What a Female THOR Could Mean for Comic-Book Movies



KATEE SACKHOFF AS STARBUCK

foregone conclusion. All of the same issues are still present – executives don't see female superhero movies as financially viable, and the performance of past examples has only solidified that opinion. Wonder Woman's presence in the upcoming *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* has a lot to prove, and we'll see whether she can break out in a way Black Widow has so far failed to do.

While the comic-book world are making increasingly encouraging decisions in regards to race and gender (sometimes, gasp, within the same characters) and TV shows like *Arrow* are also trying, it may be a while before we see that translated to the big screen.

It shouldn't be the case, since these female-led comic book titles are doing very well indeed. Not only are there more characters being introduced, but older, more bankable characters such as Harley Quinn and Supergirl are also being pushed front and centre.

It points to a larger shift in movies, TV and the rest of entertainment, with the after-effects of *Frozen*'s unprecedented success still to be seen and the proven success of entirely female-centric properties even outside of sci-fi and fantasy such as *Orange is the New Black*. 'Girly' stuff isn't all about YA romance adaptations anymore, with legitimate heroines starting to feature in previously male-targeted films and franchises.

The increasing potency of the debate surrounding both race and gender in the superhero/comic-book arena has shone a light on casting in adaptations in general,

with many arguing for complete faithfulness to the point where Donald Glover could never be Spider-Man and Jimmy Olsen should always and forever be a male character.

Glover summed up the narrow-mindedness of this argument in his stand-up (available on YouTube) shortly after the *Spider-Man* incident – if Peter Parker can be black, then what's to stop white actors taking on traditionally black roles? If it doesn't change core character traits, or indeed if a writer or director wishes to do something different with the property, then why shouldn't this be allowed to happen?

Think how much was added to the remake of *Battlestar Galactica* with the casting of Katee Sackhoff as Starbuck, or to the *Alien* franchise with the gender-switched role of Ripley – we'll never know what might have been if the head honchos hadn't taken a chance on those characters, but it turned out okay nonetheless.

Marvel are at the top of their game, with no sign of their success waning in the near future, and we have to assume that their current roster of superheroes is going to have to shift and change over the years (or even decades). This has been happening in the comics forever, and was even done in *The Dark Knight Rises* with the passing of the Bat-torch to Joseph Gordon-Levitt's character, and there's no good reason why it can't also happen in this ever-evolving, ever-expanding universe.

When old properties sport an imbalance in gender or racial representation, then writers, directors and actors should be

celebrated for addressing the problem head-on. Most recently, a planned reboot of *Danger Mouse* announced that it would be making some traditionally male characters female, purely to bring the film into modern times and probably expand their audience at the same time.

For so many examples of this forward thinking to crop up in a single year, and now for one of the biggest switch-ups in comics history to arrive at the same time, is heartening to see. Films like *Twilight* and *Frozen* proved that women were willing to pay money for something they liked, while *The Hunger Games* proved that boys might also engage with something primarily marketed towards girls.

Though we have seen two sides of the argument come out to say their piece since the news was announced, the reaction from comic-book fans and others has actually been largely positive and/or constructive. It's nothing like the now-sleeping but oft-heated debate surrounding the prospect of a female *Doctor Who*, for example, so maybe this particular group of fans are ready for the kind of change a female Thor might bring?

Now, maybe studios could start integrating this new way of thinking into movies on the whole, with blockbusters featuring better female characters and female-led movies marketed at a wide audience, rather than just the assumed tween demographic. It might not happen tomorrow, but this major shift in thinking in one medium can only mean good things down the road.



SIGOURNEY WEAVER AS ELLEN RIPLEY



THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT
STARBURST

PRESENTS A

PREDATOR STATUE GIVEAWAY

sideshow.com/WinPredator

SPONSORED BY



SIDESHOW
COLLECTIBLES.COM

PREDATOR



HORROR

Obscura

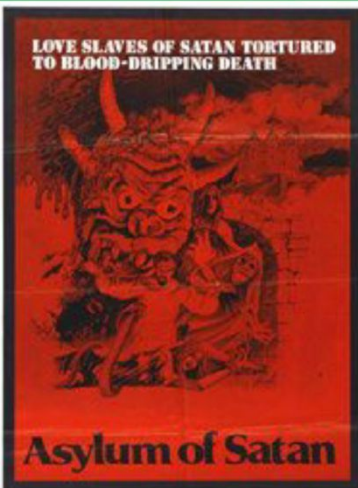
This month, the manifesting Martin Vnsworth explores the offbeat films of one of the 70s forgotten grindhouse directors...

SATAN, WILD ANIMALS and DEMONS!



William Girdler's short career in exploitation cinema may not be the most celebrated, but the films he made would become favourites of fans all over the world. Admittedly, usually the type of fan who prefers their entertainment a little rough around the edges, but it sometimes pays to see the value of manure.

Girdler's debut, *Asylum of Satan* (1971) opens with a jaunty Harry Nilsson-esque tune (written by clapperboard-loader Don Wrege and 'a' Christopher Lee - just not that one), and soon accelerates into a surreal nightmare. Pianist Lucina Martin (Carla Borelli) awakes disorientated in a strange room, but not so much that she doesn't forget to hold the gown's rear flap shut so we don't see her granny panties. A nurse, Martine, enters and sternly explains that a Doctor Specter (Charles Kissinger, who would appear regularly for Girdler) will see her in the morning. Despite being in the county hospital the night before, she has no idea why she is there as her own physician only prescribed some rest. A strange bunch occupies the hospital - those not in wheelchairs and covered head to toe in what is probably a bed sheet have afflictions that the doctor claims he will cure: one is blind, one can't walk, and one can't talk. The nurses are just as odd, they all have a vacant, lost look. The doctor himself is an acerbic despot, clad in a frilly shirt and stick-on goatee. Lucina is clearly not happy at being there, especially when fiancé Chris (Nick Jolley, who sang the opening tune) turns up and isn't allowed in to see her. He's so upset he goes to her regular doctor (who is also wheelchair-bound, perhaps one of



Starring CHARLES KISSINGER • CARLA BORELLI • Nick Jolley • Louise Bandy
Produced by J. Patrick Kelly III • Written & Directed by William Girdler • 1975
A Studio I Associates Presentation



the sponsors was in the mobility industry?), but he can't provide any answers as to why she has been sent to a sanatorium. When Chris returns later, the place is overgrown and deserted; the only person there a familiar-looking caretaker. It's not surprising that Chris recognises him, as it is indeed Specter. Naturally, things are not as they seem. As one would expect from the title, Specter is actually a Satanist, using the patients of the asylum for his sacrifices. The poor unfortunate woman who was so convinced she would walk again is thrown in a room, gassed and left to die while dozens of rubber insects scurry (via bits of string) over her body. Equally unimpressive snakes attack the blind girl while she's exercising in the pool, wrapping themselves around her, sinking their rather large fangs into her, and attempting to force themselves down her throat, all while she's flailing around pitifully.

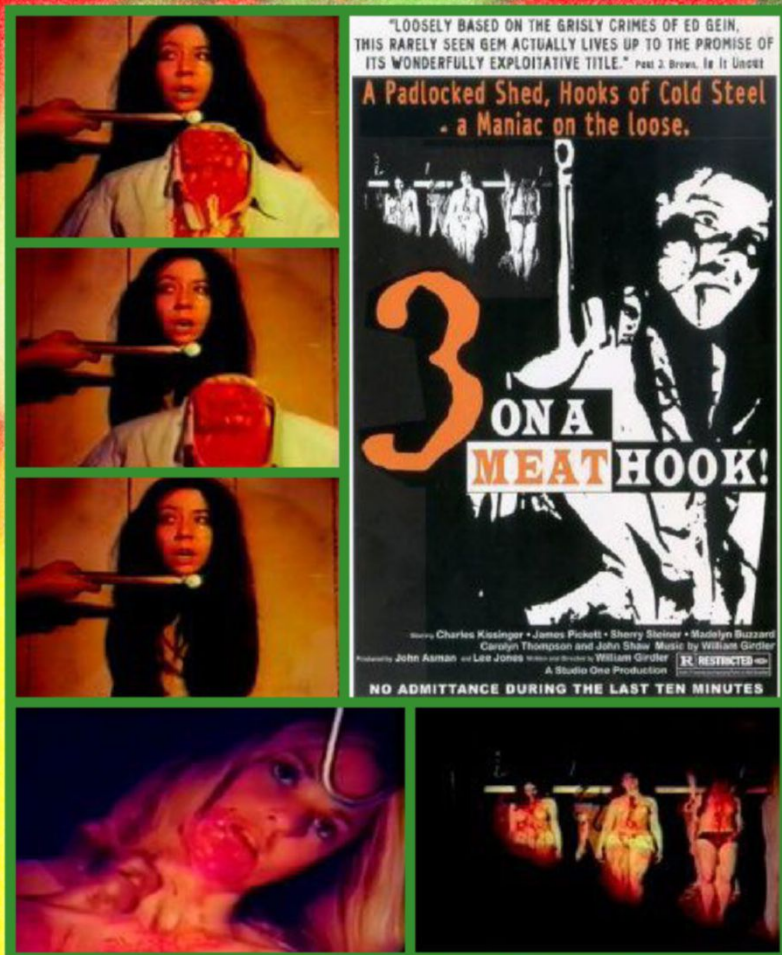
When Chris goes snooping around the hospital, he's horrified to find a severed head. Plonking it down on the police chief's desk, he's told that the doctor actually died twenty years ago. He still has to bully the cop into getting a search warrant sorted, though. They make it to the asylum just as Specter has Lucina set for his final sacrifice, one that will allow him to live on. Among the maniacal

laughing, it's a climax full of revelations; such as the not-so-surprising twist that Martine is actually Specter in drag and the appearance of Beelzebub himself. It's a shoddy-looking, if grotesque effect, and in keeping with the tone of the no-budget film. Another twist comes when Satan finds that Lucina is not a virgin as required by the rites. By the time Chris and the cop arrive at the hospital, it is once again dilapidated, Lucina wearing the same clothes in which she arrived. Are we to assume then, that this was all a breakdown-induced psychotic episode? Possibly, although the final moments have Chris surrounded by the robe-clad Satanists and the Devil, and the very last shot, a close-up of Chris' eyes - yellow tinted to infer that perhaps he is a new receptacle for the horned one.

Yes, it's fairly inept in both acting and directing stakes, but this only heightens the bizarre, otherworldly quality. Girdler was clearly finding his feet, and although the film performed badly - the rights reverting to the backers in the hope they may actually see some return for their money. It's worth noting that the climactic Satanic Rite was overseen by real-life members of Anton LeVey's Church of Satan, and written by high-ranking priest,

Michael Aquino, with genuine artefacts as props. It's a shame they couldn't provide the real Devil, as although it's creepy looking (reminiscent of the creature in *Night of the Demon*), the mask used provokes giggles rather than terror. The body, however, was actually the same costume used in Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (1968).

Following the poor reception of his first film, Girdler had to scale back the budget for *Three on a Meathook* (1973). The story, influenced by the Ed Gein story (and predating *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Deranged*), begins with a group of girls running out of gas in the middle of nowhere. Billy (James Pickett), a hick who had been spying on them while they were skinny-dipping, offers to take them home. His Pa (Kissinger) isn't too keen on them staying, "You know what happens when you're around women" he warns. It seems he was right to be concerned, as no sooner are the girls tucked up in bed are they stabbed, shot, and decapitated by a heavy-breathing assailant. The beheading is actually quite effective; it has a nice build-up of tension, the girl is attempting to leave the dark house, and then with one swipe of a hatchet, her headless body slumps to the floor with a sickly thud; the



actor's real head held aloft against the wall by the blade. In the morning, Billy is mortified when his father shows him what has happened. "I don't remember it. I couldn't have done it", he cries. Pa calmly tells him to go into town, take in a movie, and not to worry about it. Therefore, to take his mind off it, he goes to visit his mother's grave, and asks her to tell him what to do. Drowning his sorrows in a bar, Sherry (Sherry Steiner, also the blind girl in *Asylum*) strikes up a conversation, keeping him topped up with drinks. This lengthy scene is more a showcase for 'The American X-press', whose dodgy lyrics overpower most of the couple's dialogue. Billy wakes the following morning lying next to Sherry. Timidly looking under the covers, he notices they are both naked. "I had to take them off, you had an accident", but before we can process that appalling piece of information, Sherry is parading her body in front of the rather uncomfortable-looking Chris while getting dressed. She's a sympathetic sort, though, so they spend the day together, Chris opening up about losing his mother while he was away from home. He tells her that Pa has never been the same since he came back, but at least he taught himself to cook! Foolishly, he invites Sherry over to stay, causing his father to accuse him

of being a killer again. This gives Chris a nightmare, in which he remembers his father showing him the body of a woman, manhandling him to face the corpse like a puppy who's soiled the carpet, "Look at what you've done". When Sherry and her friend, Becky (Madelyn Buzzard) arrive, Pa is drunk but still cooks up some tasty smoked meat for their dinner. It's unlike anything they have tasted before, and it doesn't take a genius to figure out why, especially considering the title!

Lacking in any real finesse, the biggest problem with *Meathook* is the stilted acting from some of the cast, particularly Steiner who delivers her lines as if reading them straight from the script. That said, there's an air of disquiet about the film, possibly strengthened by the fact that no decent copies exist. All official releases so far have looked like poor VHS dupes, instantly giving the viewer that 'video nasty' feeling. At several points, characters seem to talk into the camera, not quite breaking the fourth wall, but certainly making us feel uncomfortable (particularly in the scene in which Becky tells a bizarre tale about her ex-husband). An interesting story about covering up and denying mental illness is fighting to get out of the mess of a script, and the gore scenes

(which are not as gruesome as they are disturbing) are fun. The eerie score adds some much-needed atmosphere.

As the seventies progressed, the popularity of films aimed at the black community prompted Girdler to steer in that direction. The first, *Abby* (1974), courted controversy due to its resemblance to Warner Brothers' hit, *The Exorcist*. While there are many similarities, it takes just as many liberties as others did in the wake of the massive success of William Friedkin's adaptation of William Peter Blatty's book. However, for some reason *Abby* bore the brunt and WB sued the distributor, AIP.

The film opens with archaeologist, teacher, and theologian Garnet Williams (played by Blacula himself, William Marshall - that's a lot of Bills!) embarking on a mercy mission to Nigeria. In between helping out following recent natural disasters, he hopes to document and examine the Eshu cult of the Yoruba religion. A lesser god to these people, Eshu became a symbol of sexuality. This is particularly apparent when he finds an idol while searching in a cave; carved into the wood is a figure with an erect penis, which he can't resist giving a little rub. Opening the hollow effigy, he and his crew are thrown asunder by



a strong, mysterious gale which comes from the container, sending a cloud of dust throughout the cave and the men crashing into the rocks. While this is happening, we get a couple of not-so subliminal images of Eshu; bald, save for a few tufts of hair, Neanderthal eyebrows and with demonic, wrinkled, and misshapen features. No good will come of this.

Meanwhile, Garnet's son, Emmet - a pastor - is moving into a new home with his wife, Abby. Their first night there, he is awakened by a sudden gust of wind which sends doors slamming and furniture shaking. Abby, waking, assumes he actually wants something else. "Your skin is so cold", he tells her. "Well, you know just how to warm me up". The next few days, Abby notices something strange: she has become prone to spontaneous orgasms. While showering, a shadow appears to embrace her, enveloping her body. And it gets worse. As she is preparing lunch for the church, another orgasmic episode compels her to slice into her arm with a carving knife. During a church service, she begins convulsing, throwing up over one of their friends - while attempting to ravish him. Emmet notices other changes too; she belittles his manhood, literally kicking him there. It also affects her role as a marriage

guidance councillor when she rips open her top and offers to show the husband how to do things properly! Abby has turned into a profanity-spouting promiscuous hell-beast whose purpose is to enjoy the sins of the flesh, while bringing down Garnet.

Despite the lawsuit, Abby has very little in common with *The Exorcist* other than the foul-mouthed possession of a female. Girdler's film is certainly aimed squarely at the exploitation market; appealing to both the black community and horror fans. As if many 'blaxploitation' films, the portrayal of characters is borderline stereotypical, but is certainly not as overly offensive as some.

Jaws hit big in 1975, and 'animals attack' films became all the rage. Girdler's response, *Grizzly* (1976), was his biggest success, grossing \$39 million worldwide. It's easy to see why. Not only is the stalking bear a formidable force, when it strikes, the results are suitably gory. There are severed limbs everywhere, and faces become a mess of claw-marks. Plot-wise, *Grizzly* follows many of the same beats as Spielberg's blockbuster, but also features elements which pre-date the famous slasher films, particularly the use of bear POV (complete with heavy breathing) and the bloody carnage, and works better overall than other

cheap cash-ins such as *Tentacles*, *Tintorera* or *Barracuda*.

Like *Jaws*, the film received an 'A' certificate in the UK, but did suffer several cuts to the gore scenes. It helps having a decent cast; Christopher George (*City of the Living Dead*), Richard Jaeckel (*The Green Slime*) and Andrew Prine (V) all add gravitas to the proceedings, as does the widescreen cinematography (by Girdler regular, William L. Asman). Despite the film's success, Girdler ended up penniless as the distributor/producer kept the profits, causing the director to sue. A film made in 1983 by co-writer/producer David Sheldon entitled *Predator: The Concert* has often been dubbed *Grizzly II*, and featured small roles for youngsters Charlie Sheen, George Clooney and Laura Dern, but it was abandoned when the mechanical bear didn't work and the executive producer disappeared with the budget. Although copies of the work print exist, it's never officially been released.

Next, Girdler continued the 'nature bites back' theme, with an ecological edge. *Day of the Animals* (1977) opens with a caption warning about the depletion of the ozone layer, and that the events in the film could well happen if things don't change. That



may be true, but hordes of marauding wild beasts have yet to attack society on a grand scale. This is what happens in this beautifully shot, and surprisingly taut, thriller. Capitalising on the success of Grizzly, it amps up the creature quota with an array of furry and feathered critters becoming vicious due to the effects of the Sun's rays. Leslie Nielsen's obnoxious, racist loudmouth is a million miles away from the goofy roles that he'd later be known for, particularly when the ozone's effects get to him too, and he becomes a homicidal, potential rapist (stopped by a bear who comes for an angry cuddle). Among the memorable animal attacks is a brilliant scene in which leaping rats attack the sheriff, achieved by attaching the little rodents to wires and tugging them. Girdler manages to build the anxiety throughout, and despite the hackneyed dialogue and the occasional iffy effect shot, it holds up as a great example of the sub-genre.

Despite the bigger names in the cast and a fabulous score by Lalo Schiffrin (Dirty Harry), it still couldn't compete with the big-budget disaster epics of the time. Lynda Day George (Mission: Impossible, Pieces) and Susan Backlinie add a little glamour, the latter being one of the animal trainers, and manages to last longer than

she did in her most famous role as the first victim in Jaws.

The Manitou (1978) had a larger budget, noticeable from the outset. An evocative title sequence and Schiffrin's rousing score setting the mood perfectly. Based on the best-selling novel by Graham Masterton, it tells the story of Karen (Susan Strasberg) who has developed an unsightly lump on her back. Moving while it grows, 'as if something is trying to get comfortable', she seeks solace from her ex, Harry (Tony Curtis), who passes himself off as a Tarot reader and psychic. When the surgeon begins to operate to remove the abscess, Karen begins speaking in tongues and he is compelled to slice into his own hand instead. A similar attempt to remove it with lasers results in the laser shooting everywhere as if it was a futuristic gun.

Burgess Meredith hams it up in a cameo as a flamboyant anthropologist, appearing to have no idea what he's talking about, but gives it his all nevertheless. The growth is the spirit of an ancient Native American Witchdoctor, returning as a 'Manitou', a force within everything; typewriters and computers included, if we believe the crazy climax! An unforgettable sequence in which Karen 'gives birth' through her Mr Punch-

sized hump is spectacular, with the creature freaking us out enough for them to forget how dumb the rest of it is. Diminutive Felix Silla (Cousin It in The Addams Family and Twiki in the Buck Rogers series) plays the reincarnated shaman who bears a grudge on the white man for invading North America, and killing his people. Despite the obligatory dodgy dialogue, it's quite an effective in delivering chills and shocks (and unintentional laughs, particularly during the bizarre finale), and is worth revisiting for fans of schlocky horror.

On January 21st, 1978 while in the Philippines location scouting, the helicopter carrying Girdler crashed, killing him instantly. He was only 30. The Manitou, released posthumously, became a hit on video in the early eighties. In 1977, he said of his films, "Other people learned how to make movies in film schools. I learned by doing it. Nobody saw Billy Friedkin's or Steven Spielberg's mistakes, but all my mistakes were right up there on the screen for everybody to see" which is a fair assessment. While he didn't make a particularly big splash, his films were interesting and entertaining. A legacy anyone would be happy to leave.





Words: Andrew Dollard

THE RINGMASTERS



The Ghiodo Brothers' **KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE** has long been a cult favourite of genre fans. To mark the new Blu-ray release of the 1988 classic, we were lucky enough to catch up with brothers Charlie, Edward and Stephen to discuss their animation company, design work for **CRITTERS**, the twisted humour of **KILLER KLOWNS**, working on **TEAM AMERICA**, and a whole, whole lot more...

STARBURST: Whilst most of our readers will know you for *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, you guys have had your own animation company for what seems like forever. How did that all start?

Edward: To actually pay the bills! We always wanted to make movies as kids, growing up that was our ambition. We found out that when you move to Hollywood they don't just let you make movies, you have to make a living and pay your dues. So the effects company came out of that.

Stephen: What we did was, while we were pursuing our motion picture ideas, we used our art skills to work in the industry, to earn money to help finance the development of some of our ideas. I worked as an animator, Charlie worked as an art director and storyboard artist, and Edward did some mechanics and fabrication. We built the company around creating special effects for other people while we were developing our own projects.

Charlie: The reason you start your own company is if you wanna tell your own story. If you're happy just working for other people and doing contract work, that's what you do. We felt that we had to start our own company to tell our stories and get our ideas out there. When you work over at Disney, unless you're in the upper story department, you're basically doing Disney stories. There are stories of people being able to develop their own but it's unlikely; they have a list of things that they need to do. We needed to do it on our own. I think we wouldn't have done *Killer Klowns* had we been working full time with a major company.

Was there anything particular that inspired you to want to create things when you were younger?

Stephen: For me, it was the original *King Kong* that Willis O'Brien created. Those



days we lived in the Bronx. We had some train tracks right down the block, so when I saw King Kong walking down that street, tearing down those trains, that was totally reality. That really inspired us. I looked at that, then our love for dinosaurs and natural history. But *King Kong*, that world is what we wanted to create.

Edward: Yeah, that world and the Ray Harryhausen movies, like *Jason and the Argonauts*, and you can throw in some great *Godzilla*, giant monster movies.

Charlie: Back in the day, they'd run those great monster movies all the time; there were matinees and you could see any movie you wanted, but not on television and we didn't have access to video at will. But if I had to take it down to its basic level, the love of monsters is what inspired us to create things. We fell in love with monsters and we wanted to find out how to make those kinds of movies.

On that topic, have any of you guys seen the latest *Godzilla* movie at all?

Edward: I have. Technically, they created a character that fitted a world that's entirely believable. Technically, the design is flawless. Not my favourite movie – I think they cut away from the action that you wanna see too much. They don't show enough of it. They do a lot of character story, which is important in a movie, but I wanted to see more monsters. In the past they used to hide the monster because the monster was shitty. Now the monsters are realistic and they still don't show them. That annoyed me.

Stephen: What got me was, they didn't keep the original *Godzilla* roar. I dunno if they had the licence to that, but they seemed to hold that back.

And going back to the animation company that you guys have, who's responsible for what?

Stephen: The way the company usually works is the responsibility is usually along with the talent skills. Charlie does the 2D illustrations, so he's like the production designer and art director. Edward has the mechanical skills to do some of the animatronics and designs, and he handles a lot of the producing chores, keeping the business going and producing the projects that we work on. And I come up with some of the ideas; come up with the little writing we do, and direct some of the activities; the stop-motion or puppeteering.

Was it a conscious effort to learn different skills, or did different things come naturally to each one of you?

Charlie: As kids, Stephen aspired to sculpting, I was always



“Parents offer up their children to clowns because they're fun and they're happy. If they only knew...”



working with pencils and paints, Edward was always tinkering with things, building things, so our natural tendencies made it a perfect collaboration because we had certain skills that we were able to develop, and now we have an overlap of creative skills and writing and of developing projects. So it made it an interesting collaboration.

The '80s saw you get involved with the *Critters* movies. How did that come about?

Charlie: That was interesting. It was actually supposed to be done by Kevin Yagher, who worked with New Line Cinema on the Freddy movies. *Critters* came up and he was busy on a Freddy movie, so he recommended us to the producers. That was what we called our first team special effects show – we did all the effects, all the Critter effects on those movies. Then subsequently, on the next three episodes. That's how it started. We were doing contract work for other companies, but that was our first feature film effects.

Edward: So they sent over a script, we read it, set up some meetings with producers and writer/director Stephen Herek. They were described as "furballs with teeth." So Charlie went and did some quick sketches of possible character designs. We went into a meeting, showed them the designs, they liked what we came up with, and then we got the job from there.

Stephen: I did maquettes. Charlie did the sketches, then I did a three-dimensional sculpture of the character. Then they all just appeared. In the early '80s, I think because of our combined talents – Charlie draws and I did the maquettes – as an effects company we had a little bit of an edge. We were able to actually illustrate them in three dimensions, which not many companies were doing at that time.

So you guys just came up with the *Critters* design yourselves then?

Edward: It was a basic description from the director, but then they wanted it to be not too anthropomorphic, they didn't want it to look like a man could fit inside it as if it was a suit. So we had to do very small arms, almost non-existing legs – really, just a big mouth.

Charlie: It was then just fine tuning the design with Herek. There were things he wanted to see; given twenty different variations to see, he'd say, "I like the arms on this one, the body on this one." We were incorporating things from Looney Tunes, like the Tasmanian Devil.

So when the time came to do *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, did it feel like a natural progression to finally do your own movie?

Stephen: Yes, absolutely. We came to California in 1980 with the idea of making our own movie. Slowly but surely, as we got to know the industry and the industry got to know us, we produced a little short film that won an award at an animation festival, then we did a local ABC afterschool-type special, a little half-hour fantasy drama that we wrote and I directed. They were like small steps that led us up to *Killer Klowns*.

Charlie: It was all a connection, it was a very natural progression, always keeping in mind that we wanted to eventually make our own movies and tell our own stories. We were doing contract work to survive, working for other companies, learning the business. We did our short; we did our afterschool special; we were working with Shelley Duvall's *Faerie Tale Theatre*, doing special props, paintings and characters for them. Fred Fuchs, the executive producer, said there's a company that's just opened up and are looking for movie ideas, for \$1 million

to \$2 million direct-to-video kind of things. So he took us in and we had this silly idea. We wanted to do stop-motion animation, which is very time consuming and expensive. We thought of getting guys in costumes and doing a cool, edgy movie, and we brought them *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*.

Where did the idea for *Killer Klowns* originate?

Edward: An archetypal fear! I tried to imagine the most frightening image I could think of. To me, it was driving down a lonely mountain road and having a car pass me by and have a clown driving that car. The clown being where it shouldn't be, to me, was pretty frightening.

Charlie: We could've made a clown movie based on clowns because people share a fear and mistrust of clowns. The fact was, the conversation just went to an area where it was more about what if the clown wasn't in a car. The only conclusion we could come to, if the clown wasn't in a car then it must be from outer space. That's the evolution of a concept. Going from scary clowns, who would think of killer klowns from outer space? That's so absurd.

Edward: Then you've got these killer clowns, but how are they going to kill people? Of all the circus motifs, carnival motifs, anything involved with that sort of clown performance, like cotton candy, popcorn, jack-in-a-boxes, all things that were used in their regular act was looked at. They were what we called cotton candy kills, sugar-coated kills.

Stephen: What it played into is this fear that everybody has about clowns, whether they know it or not. People embrace anything kind of clown-like or carnival-like in our world. You can have a clown standing in the middle of nowhere



then, like a moth to a flame, people are driven towards it. Parents put their most precious commodity, without a second thought, in the hands of a clown. They offer up their children to clowns because they're fun and they're happy. If they only knew...

The film went on to achieve cult status. Did you ever envisage it getting the reaction that it did?

Stephen: No, we never thought people would like it as much as they have or that it'd be around for as long as it has. We just tried to make the movie that we enjoyed. We got a kick out of it, we had a lot of fun brainstorming ideas, we had a lot of fun making it. It was just something we wanted to do, it was a passion piece.

Edward: We made a movie that we wanted to see. The fact that people have kept it alive for nearly 25 years is really rewarding.

Charlie: We've always been about character and story. The trend at the time, in the '80s, it was the Freddy movies, slasher movies, the *Friday the 13th* movies; men killing women and terrifying women, slicing your throat with knives. We didn't think that was amusing. You've seen clown movies where clowns take sledgehammers and crush people's heads. We wanted to do something different so we added a little humour, had them killing you with cotton candy and popcorn. That's the difference the Chiodo Brothers brought to the clown monster movie.

Stephen: A lot of those films end up gag-orientated with their kills but we created candy-coated kills. We just put a twist on every sort of circus motif that we could think of, then had their demise at the end.

Charlie: There were slasher movies but I would say an inspiration would have been Wes Craven and the Freddy movies. Even though they were violent, they were imaginative kills, they were in the dream world. That made it really interesting. It becomes a separation. Men killing women is too real. It's nice to have that fantasy separation that makes it make-believe and is not so frightening. It makes it fun and frightening.

Stephen: To me, it wasn't entertaining. You can have fun and enjoy a *Killer Clown* kill because it's fun and funny. In fact, I think that's where the longevity of the film is; that people saw the film when they were young, got married, had children and shared the film with their children. It was passed from one generation to the next. It's a family monster movie, a family sci-fi movie.

Charlie: We could've made an R-rated or NC-17 clown movie but that defeats the purpose. We wanted to make the kind of movies



“ We have a great concept for a **KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE** television series! ”



that we grew up with, that had some scary stuff going on. I remember the original *Fly*. It opened up with a fly getting its head crushed in a compactor, and it was a very frightening premise. Then it was still acceptable, now they've crossed the line and it's now like gore-porn.

Having finally got to the point of making your own movie, how was it to be more in charge?

Edward: We still had masters, we weren't paying for it. Making the movie was a blast, we had fun and were doing what we'd done all our lives. But the business side of it, we had more arguments with the money people than we did with the creative people. The creative people got on board with us, saw our vision and would do anything for us. It was the people writing the cheques that we had issues with.

You mentioned the likes of *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Friday the 13th*. At that time, in the 1980s, sequels were regularly being churned out. Were there any pressures on you to turn out an immediate sequel?

Stephen: The only pressure to do a sequel came from us. We already had it sold as a TV series at the USA Network after we did the film. It was an interesting company, how they arranged their financing and how they did their distribution. Let's just say it's like a real-life *Producers*. Enough said about that. They weren't interested in exploiting it the way it should've been. They had a different business model than we did.

Charlie: Out of 150 titles, they didn't really exploit the franchise possibility of any of them. *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* was something that was cherry-picked by our executive producer and he sold that as a movie and a TV series. That was the only thing. But 150 titles - imagine - not one

was exploited as a franchise possibility. **What did you ultimately want to do with the property at that time then?**

Charlie: We had the TV series sold, but TransWorld nixed the deal on that one by asking for too much money. Chris Bearde, the creator of *Sonny and Cher*, was gonna executive produce it for us - it was a slam dunk! But TransWorld didn't want us to do anything with it.

Stephen: The idea was, after our experience with a low budget feature being released, the distribution was kind of weak - we only got one or two weeks in theatres - so we thought that television would be better for the property. We thought a 13-episode series would be out there a lot longer, would help drive the merchandise. That's why we went to television with the idea, but that didn't work out. Over the years we had a sequel idea, several sequel ideas for films. The market as it is now, fewer films are being made, and bigger people than us are having trouble getting things going.

Charlie: But we still have the idea about doing the TV series.

Edward: Unfortunately, nearly 25 years later, we're still dogged by the poor box office return at the time. It made little money here in the States, it made zero money foreign as it was never released foreign! It had its success in home video, on HBO and on USA - those are the markets that picked it up and found its fanbase. Then the subsequent video releases, from VHS to the DVD to the new Blu-ray.

Charlie: What happens, the way they finance in film, they have this formula based on certain aspects. When they look at the track record of *Killer Klowns*, even though it had no foreign release, it bodes badly for the film and it's really hard to get

it going. But we do have a great concept for a TV series - like *The Walking Dead*, really long story arcs over multiple seasons - that we're talking to the MGM people about. But Hollywood works like a glacier: very, very slowly. The idea was to do a trilogy in four parts. We wanted to have the original film be the first part, then have a trilogy following up; follow our surviving characters, follow Mike Tobacco's story, follow Debbie Stone's story, follow the cop's story. It would've been a massive melodrama, like a soap opera, how their life was affected by the Klowns.

Edward: We were going to release *Killer Klowns 3* before *Killer Klowns 2*, then people would wonder what happened to *Killer Klowns 2* and we'd release it afterwards and say it was lost.

Charlie: Then we'd have a *Killer Klowns* "requel"!

We'd heard there was going to be a movie sequel, titled *The Return of the Killer Klowns from Outer Space in 3D*...

Charlie: Actually, the story I just told you about the pitch for the TV series would be the first part of that - it'd be following a new set of characters. After all of these years, we didn't know if we would do a sequel or a plain remake. Because it's been so long, people might not know if we did a sequel. So we have a concept called the "requel," where we introduce new characters to introduce a new audience to the concept, then we bring in one of our existing characters and make it like an existing adventure. Not to give too much away, but we do meet up with one of our former characters and they end up working as an aide for our new characters.

As the first movie is nearly 25 years old, did you ever think that ship had sailed, that that time had passed?

Charlie: You would dread that, you would



fear that, but then we found out that we have a third generation of audience being introduced to *Killer Klowns* on video and re-releases and stuff. We found out we still have an audience out there, plus there's still people who have an ungodly fear of clowns!

Stephen: I think every day about how this concept is dead; let's just move on to other creative ideas. Then every time we go to conventions or meet fans who really love the film, [hear] that it made a mark in their lives, it reminds me that we did make something that's worthy enough to continue with.

Edward: The struggle now is figuring out how to do that in today's economy. Is there a low budget version of it, an affordable version that you can get out? Again, the box office isn't there from the original statistics. They don't wanna hear "cult classic," they wanna hear "box office smash," they want those numbers.

So say everything comes together as you want it to, with the technological advancements that have happened since the first movie, will you still be looking to keep the effects as practical as possible?

Charlie: As far as the Klowns, they will also be practical, done with animatronic heads. In terms of different compositing, ray guns, that sort of stuff, absolutely we'll use every tool out there available to us. When it comes to the Klowns, they can't be synthetic; they've got to be real.

Stephen: When we talk to the fans, they ask us to promise to make sure we don't use CG. They get angry! They like the tangible, physical monsters of the '80s. That work is coming back. It's old school, it's more tangible, more real, and the audience seems to like that.

Charlie: As effects artists, Chiodo Brothers have always used a mixed bag. We're old school. The Ray Harryhausen tricks, we utilise those today. We make sure that we keep our minds open and we solve the problems as we need to. Digital compositing makes our jobs easier; it makes the illusions more doable.

Edward: We were one of the first companies to embrace digital compositing in television shows. So we're not opposed to it, but the Klowns have to be there.

We touched earlier on the unique deaths of *Killer Klowns*. Have you got any innovative plans in mind for the sequels?

Charlie: Do you ever drive around your neighbourhood, you see your neighbour's house and they think they have bug damages or



“Working with Matt Stone and Trey Parker was amazing.”



termites, there's giant tents. I don't think it's exterminator tents at those houses...

Edward: I don't wanna give too much away, but we have plans for an alien autopsy the likes of which have not been seen before.

And can we expect Grant Cramer to be back as Mike Tobacco?

Edward: Not to give too much away, but it's interesting. To bring back these characters, 25 years later, to see where they are. Imagine the story being two new characters experiencing the Killer Klowns, then all of a sudden they meet this drunken guy, who lives by the river, who has had his life ruined. Who do you think it is? The guy on the corner saying the end is near, talking about the upcoming Killer Klown invasion. So we'd have him working as a sort of mentor to these new guys, helping them fight what he knows is real. He's trying to unleash new Klown fighters.

Like an Obi-Wan Kenobi type, trying to pass on his knowledge?

Edward: Absolutely!

Charlie: Now you've got it.

One of the more notable things that you guys did as a studio was *Team America*. Given the nature of what was going on in the film, what was it like to be involved with that?

Charlie: That's the most difficult job we've worked on in our career.

Edward: More difficult than doing *Killer Klowns*.

Stephen: You don't see that many marionette movies because they're impossible to make. It's interesting how we got the job. They were already in production, they'd spent a lot of money to make some puppets, but it wasn't

really working out. So they came to us and asked that we jump on board and continue the production.

Edward: Because of not only our special effects experience, but our production experience as well, we were able to map and coordinate all of that. So they brought us in to pick up fabrication of the puppets, then mount the puppet department for the show, which was the movie essentially. For the puppets, there was wardrobe, there were props. It was nine months of nonstop work for us. It was the most exhausting thing that we'd ever done.

Charlie: It was the most rewarding thing we'd ever done too. Working with Matt [Stone] and Trey [Parker] was amazing. Those guys are actually comic geniuses and were a pleasure to work with. The amount of work that had to be done, the only way we got through it was that they wanted to emphasise the limitations of puppets - that was where the comedy was, with the limitations of the marionettes. Had we been required to do realistic movement, they would've never finished the movie. The comedy came from the inability of the puppets to do things. That's where the laughs came from.

Did you ever think you'd be involved with a movie that involved puppets singing, vomiting, and having sex?

Stephen: We'd worked with the guys before on their TV show *That's My Bush*. It was really great. When you see the stuff written on the script, you think, "how are we going to do this," but all the talented people got together and brought it to the screen.

Charlie: The first script, we said no. We had to say, "Guys, we can't do this." There was a scene on the Golden Gate Bridge, with school buses of children; the Korean army and navy were coming in through

the harbour. They wanted to recreate that with marionettes. We're not doing a Jerry Bruckheimer or Michael Bay movie with marionettes. We said that they'd maybe want to rethink this a little bit.

Stephen: But they do what they want, that's part of their brilliance.

Edward: It was certainly a movie that couldn't be made by anybody else. They embraced the limitations of the puppets to make this possible; that's the brilliance of the film, what makes it funny.

And on any future *Killer Klowns* outings, do you have any idea of when fans could expect to see those?

Edward: It's all very tentative at the moment; it's so difficult to say. We're reluctant to make any promises because it just makes fans a little angry and makes us lose our reputation a little bit. We're working on it but it's really, really, impossible to say when we may see that. But we do have other projects. We've written a book called *Alien Xmas* - it's about aliens that land at the North Pole and start an invasion. The elves are the first line of defence. Then there's a concept for a web-series called *Channel 8 from Outer Space*, about an independently-funded station out in the galaxy piping extra-terrestrial programming to Earth.

Charlie: We have a feature that we've been developing for quite a time; an old take on a Harryhausen-type film about Christopher Columbus' younger brother getting duped into taking a voyage to prove the world is flat. And he does.

The new Dual Format DVD + Blu-ray release of *KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE* is out now from ARROW VIDEO (also available in Limited Edition SteelBook packaging).



IF YOU'VE GOT IT, NO ONE ELSE HAS



PICK A BULLET AND GET IT
ENGRAVED WITH THE TEXT OF
YOUR CHOICE.

KEYRINGS, NECKLACES, EVEN
PET ID TAGS..... FROM £12



14SB70
STARBURST 10% DISCOUNT CODE



www.bulletwithyournameon.com



COURSE AND EFFECTS PART I

Words: Paddy O'Hare

Respected FX artist SHAUNE HARRISON has just embarked on a new project, the Manchester-based ACADEMY OF PROSTHETIC AND MAKE UP, where people can learn the craft of special effects make-up and prosthetic building. In the first part of this extensive interview, STARBURST explores his early career, pries into his AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON work, and finds out about his latest venture...

STARBURST: Your first job was on Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*, can you tell us how that came about?

Shaune Harrison: I'd been trying to make monsters at home for the last four or five years prior to getting that job. I'd cut together a sort of amateurish portfolio of stuff I was sending out to people. I'd found out that a company called Image Animation, run by Bob Keen and Geoff Portass at Pinewood Studios, were looking for crew on *Nightbreed* - it was called *Cabal* back then. So I just sent some work to them and they said, "We're not really employing anybody yet and there's issues with the budget of the film, it's going up and down, but keep in touch." This was 1988 and with no mobile phones back then the only way to keep in touch was direct calls or sending hand-written letters, and that took nine months. Then, out of the blue, I got a call from Geoff saying, "Can you start next week? We've got the green light!" I was then taken on purely as a trainee, where your job is to clean up and make tea and coffee for people, but obviously because I was always interested in making creatures I kind of went in there and said to Bob and Geoff, "Is it ok if I do a bit of sculpting and this and that?" They suggested I do stuff for the film as they needed so many creatures, and that's really how I got into it. We had six months of pre-production, which doesn't really happen nowadays, but the whole film was kind of based around creatures. I still think it's one of the biggest films for monsters ever done; we did about 250 individual creatures. Some of those were used for forty or fifty days and then every day on set we put together about fifty make-ups, regardless of whether they were going to be shot. Clive just wanted this background of creatures, and he'd said to my bosses - and it was great experience for us as we got taught on-the-job - to just do creatures every single day and you never knew if they were on camera or not. This was just a way to populate the background for all the Midian scenes, and we did all kinds of things like Rice Krispie make-ups! That was what was great about Clive, he'd say, "Right, I don't want any prosthetics!" He'd literally bring in boxes of Rice Krispies and all kinds of cereals and say, "I want creatures made out of these materials today", you'd think, "What?!"

Like the *Blue Peter* style of filmmaking?

Yeah! He's saying, "Just go crazy, spray them and stuff and they'll just be sat in corners." You'd think it wasn't going to work, but when you watch the film there's weird things going on where you're like, "what is that?!" But that's what was cool about Clive, he wouldn't want you to do something that had been done before, just do something a bit weird.

What kind of budget were they working with for something like that?

Someone said we had one sixth of the entire film production budget on special effects, and I think the budget was 6 million at the time; but I think that went up to 15. At one point, we had over 1 million, which is a hell of a lot of money and more than you would get nowadays in comparison. The average age

of people in Image Animation was about 23, and there was about 60 of us: 58 boys and 2 girls of all ages, 17 through to 30. I was 20 when I started.

That's quite a young team!

I always followed the likes of Rob Bottin; he did *The Howling* at 21 and *The Thing* at 22. It's still incredible that you can get the responsibility at that age! I started at 14, in my bedroom, and it took me until 20 to actually break into the industry, and I had no idea of how to break in! It was literally buying magazines like STARBURST and Fangoria, reading them, and copying from images. That's how I got into it. There wasn't any internet, so there was no way of contacting people. It was just through determination, writing to the studios like Pinewood and Shepperton, asking if they knew if any special effects movies were happening. Being that naive about it got me a job! I would literally send them pretty average work, but they could see potential there. I just needed to be more professional. I'd be making fake bodies in the house. When *Gremlins* came out, my Mum had this really cheap fur coat and we chopped that up and made a Mogwai with moving eyes and arms!

Movie magic was so much further away in the '80s and '90s. It wasn't all there at your fingertips, so it seemed more like a magical otherworldly place that was almost untouchable.

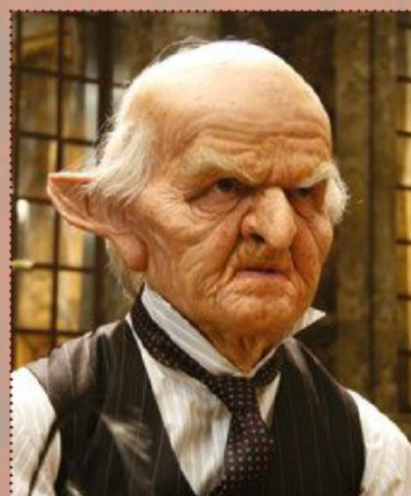
Yeah, I think also the difference is that if you wanted to do it, you had to research it, whereas now it's so much easier. There are loads of schools around, and you get all the information via YouTube or on TV. Back then, you had nothing other than video and there were no 'making of' on the videos, so I'd be watching it and rewinding it until it was totally scrambled trying to figure out how they did things.

Coming back to what you were saying about STARBURST, what was it about the magazine that inspired you?

The first thing that got me into it was something from *The Evil Dead*; it was a little article on Tom Sullivan who did all the special effect make-up on it. It was a 2-page spread of him with a fake body and he was cutting this hand off, and I was thinking, "How has he done that?" It was in my local newsagents in The Wirral and my Mum was going, "That's disgusting, there's blood pouring out!" That was in 1982, and that started me into the whole: "I wanna do that" thing! It was great! There was like six or seven photos, frame by frame; cutting the head off, and holding it up. I thought that was really cool. It must have been issue 60 or something of STARBURST. At the time, it was about the only British magazine that you could go to the newsagents and buy, so I started buying them every month. Also, it was the time when FX became massive with things like *Ghostbusters*, *Gremlins* and the *Indiana Jones* films. I was lapping it all up!

Yeah from 1977-1989 the output was just amazing!

And it was all real! There was no digital stuff, which was amazing; it was all about what





you know. Everything there was on-camera, in optical effects, but mostly creatures. It was when creatures ruled everything with the likes of Rick Baker and stuff.

Which is why it's great that it appears *Star Wars: Episode VII* will be focussed towards practical effects. What we've seen of the X-Wing and the creatures have been brilliant.

Well its 32 years after *Jedi* so they have obviously upgraded stuff, but I love it; the fact it looks rusty and battered, with paint peeling off and stuff - that's what it should be! The creatures look beautiful as well! I know Neil Scanlon, who is supervising and a few others, and they say they are having an amazing time building so much creature work. But even they can't tell me anything, because I was doing *Avengers: Age of Ultron* while they are on that, and you can't tell each other what you are doing which is so difficult.

Staying with *Star Wars*, there's a few stories there; what was the first thing you worked on?

There aren't that many key prosthetic characters in the film, they are mainly background, so for the first six weeks we were sculpting background masks, populating that universe with Squid Head and all the different ones you see in Jabba's scene which was a mass production line. Nick Dudman had this idea of doing double faces so you could turn the face around and put a hood on the back so you could get a secondary creature, but it never really worked. Then Jar Jar Binks turned up on scene; we saw some footage of the visual effects they had shot and George said he wanted to try to do a suit, and manipulate it digitally. We only had five weeks to come up with the suit, which isn't much time with life-casting; we did arms, legs, and a head that would sit above [actor] Ahmed Best's, and the paint job was so intricate. We shot some footage of it, and it ended up being a reference suit, which he was in every day,

but they did some digital manipulation of the face and we split-screened it. We'll be sat in a theatre to watch it and everyone liked our suit with the digital head as apposed to a full digital character because the movement was real. But they said, "That isn't what we are going to go with, it has to be a CG creature." I think ILM wanted to break new ground saying they could do a full CG creature.

Well it hadn't really been done yet had it, apart from the metal T-1000 and that water creature in *The Abyss*?

Yeah! It was crazy because you would shoot our character, then you would have Ahmed off set and shoot a clean plate!

With the metal ball!

Yes! The silver ball all the time, it was funny because every time it came out everyone would cheer! Just one poor trainee visual effects guy would stand there with the ball and turn it and turn it...

Obviously they were pushing the digital technology at the time, but there have been rumours recently that Disney are going to release Blu-rays of the original cuts, and they will be able to get them up to 4K... But there was also discussion about the fact that because Lucas made the decision to shoot the prequels on digital they will only be able to get those up to 2K.

Well you know, I'm not a massive fan of the 4K look to a film, but I was in the shop looking at a 4K TV and they had the *Transformers: Age of Extinction* trailer on, and it's so pristine it just looks like a videogame! It's so super-clear, it doesn't look like a film; to me that's not a film! I love watching Blu-rays. I love that quality, but then they are going to pump that up even more, and I don't like that, I don't think I could sit there and watch that. I also don't like the idea that you can do pretty much do anything you want. I was watching a documentary on *Cleopatra* and you look at those shots with thousands of extras,



and they would never do that now. I think sometimes though they just put in CG just for the sake of doing CG!

Weren't you asked to do *Star Wars: Episode VII*?

Yes, I was asked to do it but in the industry you can't jump ship as they say, you take whatever project comes up first as you have to earn a living. People ask if you're free and you say, "I'm not, but I really want to be!" They ask what you are doing and you tell them *Avengers* they say, "Oh, don't worry." It's all Disney; they own both of them. Disney were trying to stop people jumping ship, and I know *Star Wars* had a bit of a delay in starting, people were supposed to start, then stopped again for months and months.

Even more so now with Harrison Ford's leg!

Oh, I know! Crews may have to stretch their pay cheque out a bit, because if they said, "Can you leave for two weeks?" they will go elsewhere for work. So, they pay you to stay on. It happens; I did *Sleepy Hollow* and spent 3 months after they wrapped just doing pick-up shots. For crews it's the best thing ever if you go back and do re-shoots, on *World War Z* we did 8 weeks of that.

You did a load of stuff on *World War Z* that will never be seen, is that correct?

We went all over the world to shoot the film - Malta, as Israel, Glasgow, as Philadelphia, and the Russian sequence at the end of the movie which was supposed to be set six months after the beginning of the film was shot in Budapest. We were out there for six weeks, had sixty zombies per day, that's one hundred and twenty make-up artists. These were stage three zombies, so full-on three-hour make-ups with ten prosthetics on each character; six-hundred pieces per day, and we shot for thirty days. We shot this incredible sequence on the biggest sets I've ever been on, and they had made street sets of Russian houses, department buildings, flats, train tracks, and it was in this amazing

old tin factory which they had redeveloped. It was set during a snowstorm – so there was fake snow, sixty zombies, a thousand extras, tanks, snipers on the roofs, explosions and I think there is about three seconds of it in the movie! We didn't finish shooting it actually; when we wrapped we were looking at the animatics and we wondered where some of the sequences were! There was talk that we'd come back and pick up the shots in two months time, then four or five months after that there was talk of re-shoots. I think they realised that the whole sequence just didn't work because it jumped across seventy-two hours to six months, so it was like, "*What happened in between?*" because Brad had the long hair and beard, they looked like warriors with these pick axes and flames, kind of like Frankenstein and stuff. It came back they decided to re-shoot the end again because they re-shot the beginning with the family in the house to set them up, and the moment they got into the cockpit of the plane to Israel that was the new footage shot a year later.

Was this all down to the studio then?

There were seven producers I think, three new from Paramount; it was all a bit weird – a lot of heavy-going production people, everything was written down and they weren't going to waste any money...

...How much do you think was wasted on the unused sequence?

About 20 million probably on that whole scene, it was just huge; it was night shoots, so we were all staying in these amazing five-star hotels. We did the re-shoots in Margate, after we had done the plane sequence

at Shepperton, which was just stage one make-ups, about one-hundred-and-fifty, which took about half-an-hour each. When we went back and shot the end sequence in the World Health Organisation, that was shot at a disused Pfizer Building which the Americans had left pretty much intact with computers and everything, and used that as a facility. So we did the same make-up on the same performers again, but painted them slightly different but this time we were staying in a Travelodge! *[laughs]*

How did you end up directing a scene with Johnny Depp in *Sleepy Hollow*?

That weirdly came about because initially I was part of a small crew of about ten. We were doing all the heads, bodies, and decapitations. Then my boss, Ken Yagher (who did Freddy Krueger in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 1, 2, 3 and 4*, and the *Chucky* films) went back to the States, and he needed someone to stay on-board to do day-by-day, and he asked me if I wanted to run the set. So, I was kept on to shoot all the heads and stuff, and we originally shot the scene with Johnny chopping into the tree of the dead, getting his reactions, because obviously getting his stuff done first is the priority. When we had to go back and get all the shots of the tree all the creatures' crew had finished and there was only me left, so they called saying they wanted to get all the shots of Johnny hacking into the tree. I explained that we would need to rebuild that portion of the set, like a jigsaw puzzle with the heads locked in different ways, and I then dressed it on the set. I explained to Tim Burton, Johnny, and the producers, "*When you do it you'll have to go this way, this way*

and that way, because if it doesn't work it will take a few hours to set back up again." Tim said, "*You're the only one who knows how this works so do you want to direct Johnny doing it?*" I was thinking, "*What the hell?*" The producers agreed it would be easier, as did Johnny. So we rolled, and I sat and told Johnny, "*Pull this out and hit this bit, hack more! Hack into that!*" So the piece falls out and everything works really well, as I'm watching the monitor and I say: "*Yeah, yeah, cut!*" Tim turns to me and says, "*Well did we get it?*"; "*Yeah, great, move on! Move on!*" and everyone started clapping! It was one of those things where it was the last thing I expected, Johnny was great, and the producer Larry Franco, who I was a big fan of, as he produced *The Thing*, said, "*Well done, you handled it really well*". It was just really cool and all those shots you see in that sequence are my directing.

Did he actually let you sit in the chair?

[Laughs] No! I couldn't sit down anyway, I just hung out over near the monitor.

We know you can't say too much about it, but what have you been working on for *Avengers: Age of Ultron*?

I did one character called Vision, who is played by Paul Bettany and I only worked up to doing test make-ups; it's going to be a hybrid digital and prosthetic make-up. I can't say what it's like, other than it's not like the original Vision from the '40s because that looks like Ming the Merciless! He's not in it that much, I think he'll be saved for the next one as he only did about twelve days in make-up. I did a few other bits like wounds, one of which was huge and I wondered how





the hell the character would survive that! It was interesting being on set doing tests with Joss, Chris Hemsworth and all the guys trying out their updated costumes... darker of course, I hate all that. "We have to go grittier each time!" Weirdly, I still get call sheets every day from the production and I've not been on it for two and a half months, so I understand what the whole script is now! [laughs] The big thing they had is with Scarlett Johansson being pregnant; it's not her it's a double, which they will then graft her head onto because she will give birth [the] next month. When she started shooting you could tell, but they put tracking dots on her tummy so they can pull it in digitally. The two doubles look great, but it was funny because they were like, "We're gonna be stars!" It was like, "Erm, no, your head's gonna be removed!" But it was great because I did *Captain America* so I know the Marvel Universe well, plus it was great working with Joss Whedon because I'm a fan. I got it before *Star Wars* happened, and it's great, as it's my last movie before I start the school!

That brings us nicely to the Academy. So how did it come about; did you want a break from films for a bit or for good?

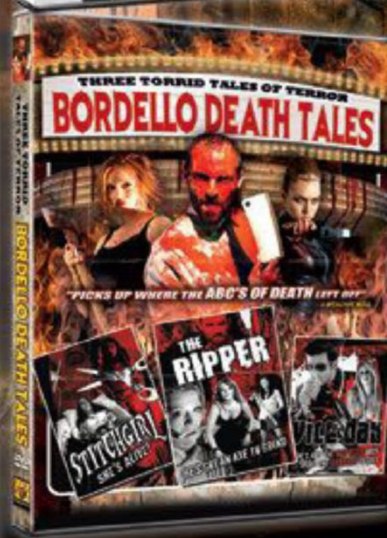
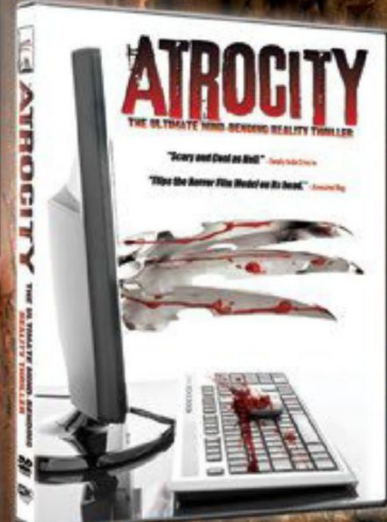
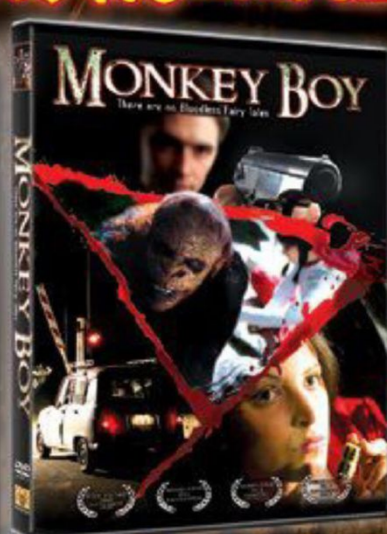
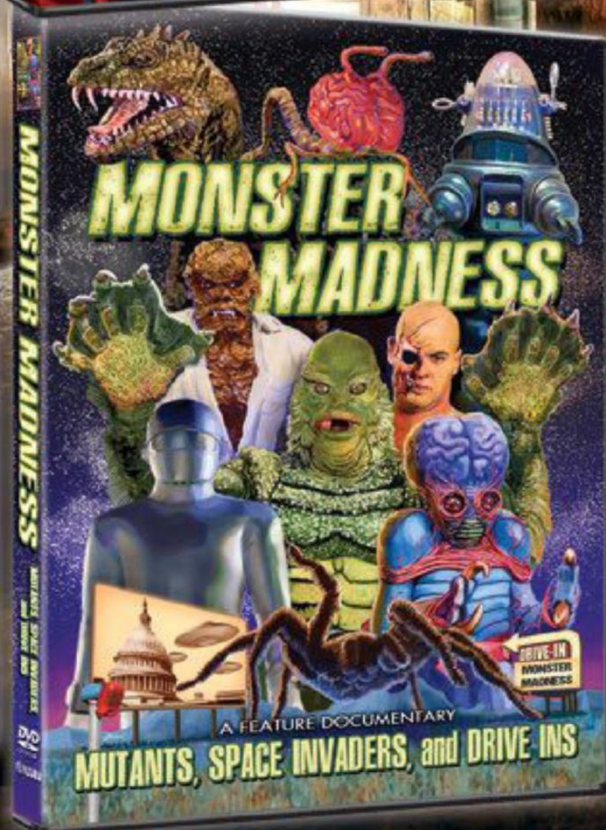
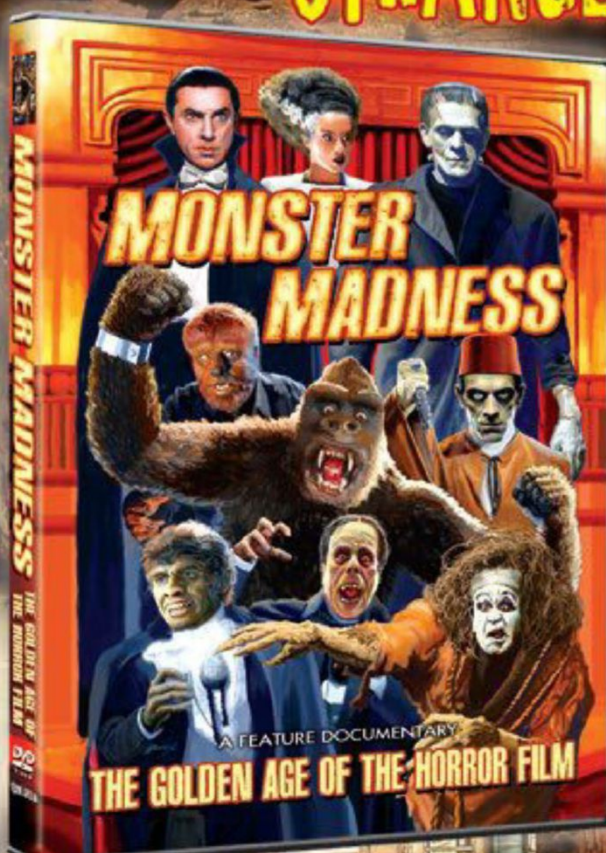
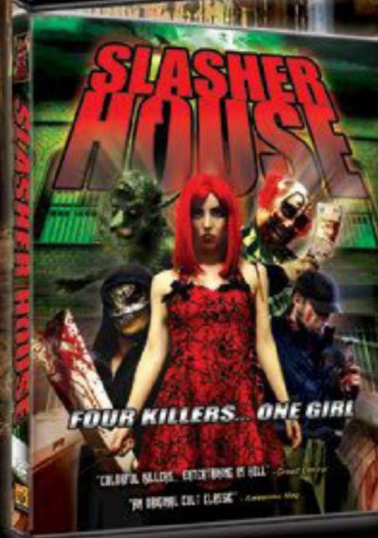
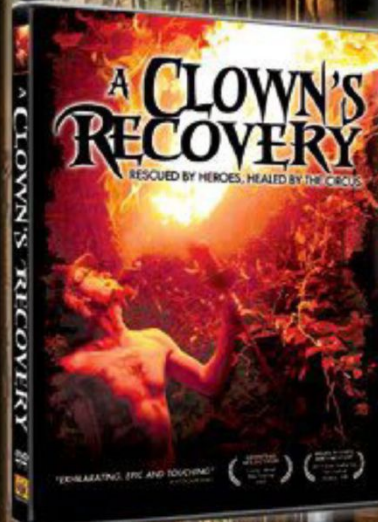
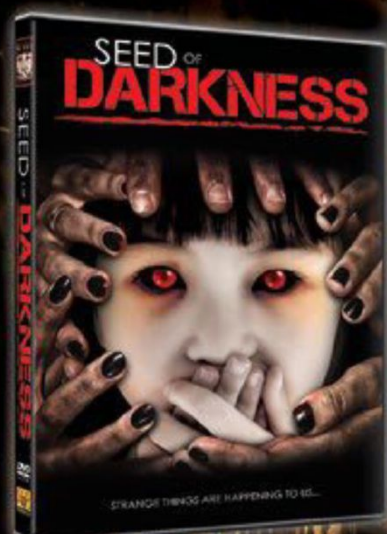
I've been teaching for a while, because when trainees come in you have to explain processes, and this is not like a beauty school, it's more about a passion for prosthetics because it's so specialised. After doing the odd few weeks teaching in colleges, in-between film jobs, I thought there was definitely a market for it, especially outside London. About a year ago, I made a decision with my wife and partner, Justina, to go for this. I'm forty-six now, I've been doing this for twenty-five years, and I don't want to be an old man doing the job. There are a lot of people who were big in the '80s and do not get work anymore because there is ageism in the industry, people like John Coppinger who sculpted Jabba the Hutt and Chrissie Overs who did *Aliens*, because they are all in their fifties. I guess bosses know they can push younger people to do longer hours for a quarter of the money, so unfortunately sometimes you get priced out of the industry too. I didn't want to do that, I thought if I can stop while the going is good, while I'm doing big films as well because I didn't want people to think I'd done it because my career is winding down to smaller films. Last year was the best year I've ever had. I did *Age of Ultron*, *Jupiter Ascending*, *Dracula Untold*, *Game of Thrones*, *Heart of the Sea*, and *Pan* - which is a good script and not *Pirates of the Caribbean* [laughs]. I've been asked twice to go back to *Avengers*, I was asked to do something with Mark Coulier last month but he couldn't tell me what, and they wanted me to run the workshop on *Game of Thrones* Season Five! I could have worked up until Christmas but I had set a date for the Academy, so I wanted to stick with it

and see what happens, so I left *Avengers*. I wanted to do it in Manchester because I'm from the North West, The Wirral, and I kind of missed home. London is great but sometimes it drives me insane as the hours are so long, it would take me an hour and a half to get to Shepperton, leaving home at 6:45am and getting home at 8pm, suddenly your life becomes a movie! Ten years of *Harry Potter* and you wonder where the time went, but it's been great. I have a great CV and it's been amazing for me, but it's time to stop. Some friends have asked me why I'm doing it, but it's now or never, I could leave it five more years and be in my fifties and not get work, but it's a chance I have to take. We found this great location not too far from Media City and we've gone for it. I mean, never say never again, but I don't know if I will ever go back. I have been offered a couple of low-budget things which I kind of like more, because you aren't fighting studio politics. So this is my next chapter really and I'm still doing what I love doing but without the stress! I want my students to get the work now; one of them has already been offered a big job in London, and so it's now being passed on to the next generation. The amount of work in London at the moment is insane and I can help get my students get the work, but I do think Manchester should be jumping into it more than they are, because it has the crews and Media City; it's time to use them! ✦

You can find out more about THE SHAUNE HARRISON ACADEMY OF PROSTHETIC AND MAKE UP TRAINING by visiting www.shauneharrisonacademy.com, where you can view the prospectus for the courses. Shaune will also be appearing at Manchester's GRIMMFEST, which runs from October 2nd-5th. The concluding part of this interview will feature in our next issue.



ENTER A DOMAIN WHERE **STRANGE IS NORMAL**



WWW.CHEMICALBURN.ORG
WWW.REALITY-ENTERTAINMENT.COM





GRIMMFEST 2014

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF HORROR AND CULT FILMS

2nd - 5th OCT, MCR



DAMES
ZOMBIES,
GUNS,
WEREWOLVES,

...AND BEAVERS!!

Sponsored by

hmv



STARBURST

JURYS
INN

MOVIE PREMIERES GENRE CLASSICS SPECIAL GUESTS

Full Festival Pass includes LIVE performance from GOBLIN
For tickets and information go to WWW.GRIMMFEST.COM



by Martin Unsworth

James Cullen Bressack

This month, INDEPENDENTS DAY meets up with a modern-day auteur, writing, directing, producing, editing, and occasionally acting among other things. His early films have been big festival hits, while also prompting controversy. As a gun for hire, he has worked for infamous US studio and Syfy channel regular, The Asylum...



STARBURST: How did you start in the business?

James Cullen Bressack: My father, Gordon, was directing voices for his show Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys (1996). There was a character named Rhesus 2, played by Malcolm McDowell. I was three years old and I asked my dad why there wasn't a Rhesus 1. He said that was a great idea and he set about writing the episode. He invited me to the recording of the episode when they were making it and I went right up to David Warner, playing Rhesus 1, and announced, "I created you!" He was not amused.

Ever since that moment, I was interested in the behind the scenes of telling stories. I've loved movies my entire life. But what really pushed me to become a filmmaker, because as a child I seriously wanted to be a professional wrestler, was when my dad got very ill when I was in the 5th grade. He was bed-ridden for years so all we did together was watch movies. It was our escape. Sick as he was, he could still discuss movies better than anyone else. I would come home every day from school and go to his room and we would watch a movie. It's how we spent our time together. Before that, we used to play baseball and go bowling and stuff, but once he got sick all we could really share was film. That is when I was inspired to make movies. I wanted to give someone, in the off chance that they were in my same situation that I was in when I was little, just one extra movie they can watch and talk about with a sick loved one.

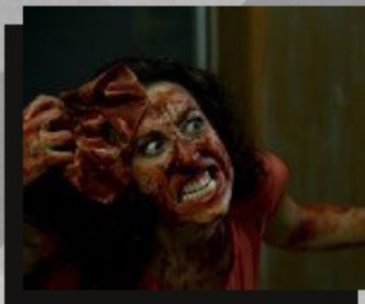
So at the tender age of 18, straight out of high school, I wrote a script and decided I would make a feature film out of it, no matter what budget I could raise. That film was *My Pure Joy*, and the budget was \$7,000.

Who were your movie heroes growing up?

I was a big fan of Frank Henenlotter, Takashi Miike, Quentin Tarantino, Park Chan-wook, Eli Roth, Stanley Kubrick, and Robert Rodriguez. Having not gone to film school, the films of these auteurs



13/13/13



were my film school. I learned everything I know from watching movies, as well as trial and error.

One of the first films to come to the attention of the horror crowd was Theatre of the Deranged, on which you directed two segments, and you are back for the sequel - do you enjoy working in the shorter format and anthologies?

I enjoy working on anthologies a lot because you get to collaborate with so many talented filmmakers and see what they do with a similar theme or concept. That said, I am much more proud of my work in Theatre of the Deranged II than I am in my work in the first one. I think anthologies are the stomping grounds for budding filmmakers and a necessity within the film world. Short form helps you experiment and grow between features.

Hate Crime attracted a lot of controversy, has that been a help or a hindrance to you? Much of the outcry was from people who perhaps didn't realise you were not glorifying the violence but highlighting that it still exists, did that bother you? Do you feel you have to live up to that level of

violence/horror in future films?

Hate Crime was such an interesting experience for me to make as a film. The World we live in today, violence exists. People try to ignore it, but there are some horrible people out there. The idea came to me when I was in Texas with my then business partner, Jarret Cohen, on our way to a screening of my first film, My Pure Joy. We stopped at a bar, being 19 at the time, I was on a fake ID. We're both Jewish and we were accosted by a group of skinheads at the bar. They surrounded him, started calling him names, threatening him and we ended up leaving the bar and one of them had a Hitler moustache tattooed on his finger (that actually made it into the movie) and after we were like 'Oh my God'. So I went and did some research and found that this stuff is going on so much more now and the media just kind of ignores it. Not only in America, in Europe too, there are huge uprisings of the neo-Nazi party. It's crazy right now with people wearing masks, showing up and then attacking mass amounts of people.

I think the controversy both helped and hindered the film. One thing that

really hurt the film was the fact that a child was murdered in the film. We were talking with a large distributor at the time and they ended up passing on the film because while we were negotiating, the tragedy of Sandy Hook happened, which changed the social climate for violent movies at that time, especially ones where children die.

Perception is an interesting beast on its own, some people realised what I was trying to do with the violence, and some people didn't. In no way was I trying to glorify violence; however, people see what they want to see. I got backlash from people for being racist, not knowing that I was Jewish. I got backlash from misinformed people saying that the world isn't violent anymore and I'm just paranoid, but interestingly enough the biggest backlash I received was on neo-Nazi forums and blogs saying that I was a Jew spreading propaganda trying to make the neo-Nazis in the film look stupid. All I have to say to anyone is look at the YouTube comments on the trailer to see the range of people's emotions on the film. I personally welcome any opinion and am glad that the film has



PERNICIOUS



been able to evoke such a response from people, although I prefer the people who understand what I was trying to do with the film, of course.

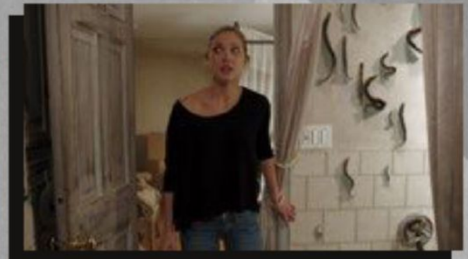
I promise that my future horror films will be quite violent, Pernicious being particularly gory. I believe it's probably my most violent film. We used Jerami Cruise, the fx wizard behind the August Underground movies. It's my favourite of my films by far.

You filmed To Jennifer entirely on an iPhone, was that conceived as a bold experiment or out of budget necessity? Interestingly enough it was a bit of both but for a few different reasons. I had been hired to direct a film called The New Neighbor. They had a Kickstarter to raise some extra money for the film. For the first and only time I promoted a Kickstarter, so fans and friends of mine donated to it. Then the producer shut down production for various reasons and did some shady business dealings, there were a ton of questionable things happening, but then one put the nail in the coffin for me. Basically, he was a horrible person and tried to

get me to put one of the actresses in an uncomfortable situation. It was a sex scene; she asked for a closed set because she didn't want to be naked in front of a ton of people, which is standard, and he went ballistic. He said he paid to see her naked and had to be in the room. I said that since it was a closed set only essential people were needed, he could be at video village with the other crew, but that wasn't okay with him. He wanted to be the room. He screamed at me and the actress, made her cry and demanded it be his way or the high way. I told him I wouldn't do it, so it would have to be the high way, because how could I get an actress to trust me and be vulnerable for me on screen if I force them to do things they simply do not want to do and never agreed to, not to mention something I found morally unethical. It should not have been as big of an issue with the producer as it was, but he was determined to get his way. He shut down production and fired me. The film was not going to ever be made, at least with me involved. I had already filmed a few days on it and I felt horrible that people who had donated

money weren't going to get the perks they had wanted, special thanks credits, DVDs, etc. So I tried to think of a way to amend that. In brainstorming, I thought about all the random fans over the years who hit me up on Facebook and Twitter saying they wanted to be filmmakers and what advice did I have to give them. I always said to them; "Go out there and make a movie, it doesn't matter how much money you have, a good story trumps all. Pick up a camera and make something. Hone your craft and grow your budget each time. Create". That's when it hit me, this couldn't just be my mantra, I had to live it. So I picked up the most accessible camera I could find, the one in everyone's pockets daily, a camera phone, and I went out there and made a movie. I wanted to prove to everyone that it was possible. To me, To Jennifer isn't just a movie, but a call to action. It's made on the most accessible type of camera in the world, on no budget. It screams, 'GO OUT THERE AND MAKE SOMETHING', nothing should stop you. And for me, I hope it inspires others to actually create. I made sure everyone who donated on the Kickstarter because of me got their perks on To Jennifer.

BLOOD LAKE



So is crowdfunding something you'd sooner avoid now, or if needs be, would you still consider it?

I think crowdfunding will be my last option. If every single option fails, then I will go to crowdfunding. But I literally mean every single option. I have to have tried to get a film made for years before turning to Kickstarter or Indiegogo, although I am not in control of that if producers randomly do so on a film I am hired to direct or write. I'll likely not promote it though. I am not a fan if you can tell. Haha!

You got to make 13/13/13 and Blood Lake for The Asylum, how was that experience compared to making films with your own production company, Psykik Junky Pictures?

I had a lot of fun working with The Asylum. Of course, when I produce and direct my own stuff there is more creative freedom allowed, but the guys at The Asylum know what they are doing and what sells for them. When I work with them, I am making a film for them. It has to fit their mould. They have a keen sense of what works in the marketplace. I like both experiences; it's just always different working for someone else, versus yourself. I would work with them again anytime.

Yeah, people tend to look down their noses at them but they are just doing what Roger Corman did in the '50s & '60s. Blood Lake in particular is a great throwback to those 'animal run amok' films and monster movies of the '70s/'80s, were you influenced by films such as Squirrel for the visuals, or was it all in the script?

I couldn't agree more. They are a lot like what Corman was. As for Blood Lake, I was heavily influenced by films like Squirrel and Piranha. Visually, I wanted to go for that and still give it a very summery look. I found it important to mix practical with CGI so it wasn't only CGI. I wanted to make the most fun film possible; a summer creature feature!

Is there a subgenre you haven't tackled yet that you would like to?

Yes actually. I really want to do something like a dark fairytale; a magical horror film that takes you into a different world. I also wouldn't mind doing a good



old American slasher film, or a horror-comedy-musical!

You have many strings to your bow, so to speak; writing, producing, directing as well as numerous technical credits, is that something you'd recommend to people hoping to get into filmmaking, or are you just good at them all?

It all depends on the path you want to take. I took the road of not going to film school; so I wanted to learn. More so, I was making films on no budget when I first started and barely anyone wanted to help me so I had to do all the jobs. I was forced into wearing so many hats because if I didn't do it, there was no one there to get it done. I learned a lot from it and think it's an essential part of my growth as a filmmaker.

Many of your films are available on DVD in the US, are there any plans to release them in the UK, or is it all down to getting the right distributor?

I would love to have them released in the UK; I have played Grimmfest in Manchester the past 2 years, and have

many UK supporters and fans. That said, I don't know if my earlier films will make it to the UK. I know 13/13/13, Blood Lake, and Pernicious will, but Hate Crime might not pass classification and My Pure Joy surely won't. If I find a distributor in the UK brave enough to put out my earlier films I would love to have them there.

Any word on when Pernicious will be released?

Pernicious should be coming out early next year. There is a trailer currently out and the producers have submitted it to festivals, they are also talking to distributors.

So what's next for you?

I am actually working on a 'romcom', believe it or not. It's the furthest thing from horror. No one dies. I'll drop more details about it when I'm allowed to.

You can contact James through Twitter (@JamesCullenB) and watch Hate Crime online through his production company at www.psykikjunkypictures.com. His films are also available on Region One DVD.





HATE CRIME

DIRECTOR: JAMES CULLEN BRESSACK / SCREENPLAY: JARRET COHEN, JAMES CULLEN BRESSACK / STARRING: JODY BARTON, NICHOLAS ADAM CLARK, GREG DEPETRO, MAGGIE WAGNER, DEBBIE DIESEL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW (REGION 1 ONLY)

Mixing two recently-popular tropes - found footage and home invasion - Bressack's second film manages to be both a kick in the gut and a sobering look at extremist mentalities.

Celebrating the birthday of their youngest son (Sloane Morgan Siegel), father (Depetro) is filming everything on his camcorder, while mother (Wagner) keeps their other children (Diesel and Clark) in check.

Their peace and enjoyment is shattered when a group of three masked Neo-Nazis barge in, and proceed to cause mayhem; killing, torturing and raping as much as they can. The reason? The family is Jewish, obviously they have moved into the wrong neighbourhood as far as this gang of crystal-meth-crazed lunatics are concerned.

Hate Crime is brutal. It's nasty. It's all very uncomfortable to watch. And it's meant to be. There's no denying that there are horrible-minded people out there. It doesn't matter what religion, race, or anything these people are, they exist. For someone to take his or her 'beliefs' to the extreme of harming or even just inconveniencing another human being is deplorable. Those are the facts. With Bressack's film, we have an alarming group who seem to under many people's radar: those who still support the Nazi ideals.

It wastes no time getting going, the gang are in the house and brutalising within the first five minutes. They are high on meth, and clearly not in control of their thoughts; quite often their actions even come across as buffoonish. However, there is nothing remotely funny about them, nor should they be. The terrible and disturbing acts they both commit and force their captives to commit are sickening.

It's not violence for the sake of it. Once the invaders take control of the camera and begin filming their actions, we are drawn into their world; powerless to stop it, almost becoming complicit.

While it can be argued that the thugs' treatment of the women of the house - which is barbaric and deeply upsetting - isn't as realistic as it should be (it's hard to imagine they'd stop at stripping them to their underwear), it's powerful and horrific enough to make its point. Anything further may have strayed too far into exploitation and taken the focus away from the serious issues the film raises.

It's certainly not a fun film, but it's an impressive use of the format, and worth catching if you have the stomach for it.



REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



LIFE AFTER BETH

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JEFF BAENA / STARRING: DANE DEHAAN, AUBREY PLAZA, JOHN C. REILLY, MOLLY SHANNON, CHERYL HINES, PAUL REISER, MATTHEW GRAY GUBLER / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 3RD

After his recently deceased girlfriend Beth comes back from the dead, Zach is initially overjoyed that he's been given a second chance with her. But as her zombie-like characteristics start to take over, he begins to question how much of her true self there is left, and if this means he should do something about it.

Nobody would deny that zombies are the "in" thing these days. But while the popularity of shambling flesheaters continues unabated, attempts are continuing to be made to infuse the undead with a degree of humanity. It's nothing new – even in Romero's films the zombies were shown to be capable of learning – but nowadays they're even allowed to express emotion. Gaining increasing traction is the rom-zom-com (romantic comedy with zombies), which began with *Shaun of the Dead* and continued with *Romeo and Juliet* riff *Warm Bodies*. *Life After Beth* is the latest in this bizarre fusion of genres.

As Zach, Dane DeHaan (*Chronicle*) mixes bereavement and hopefulness, wanting to believe he and Beth truly have a future despite developing circumstances indicating its increasing unlikelihood, and he has fantastic chemistry with Aubrey Plaza (*Parks and Recreation*) in the eponymous role. Although Beth could have easily come off as psychotic or pathetic, Plaza navigates her tempest of emotions with such

precision that she never feels unworthy of your sympathy, even when smashing car windows, punching through walls, or appearing splattered with the blood of some anonymous guy she's just eaten.

Plaza has always excelled at dripping deadpan sarcasm with nothing more than a facial expression, and such blank looks form the basis of Beth's emotional instability in-between her lurches from one mood extreme to another (tempered only by, somewhat incongruously, smooth jazz). Beth is initially unaware she was actually dead, the relevant memories a blur within her mind and, in an unspoken callback to *Dawn of the Dead*, keeps returning to the state of reality she was in around the time of her death, while the constant confusion adds to her frustration with nobody telling her exactly what's going on.

Right from the beginning and throughout, the film deals with the aftermath of losing someone and the toll it takes on those left behind. Some touching and unforced moments include Beth's family using her return to alleviate the regrets tormenting them since her funeral, with Zach taking the opportunity to tell her everything he wished he had when she was alive, or her mum taking as many photos of her as possible after previously lamenting how few she had.

Even though the world slowly goes

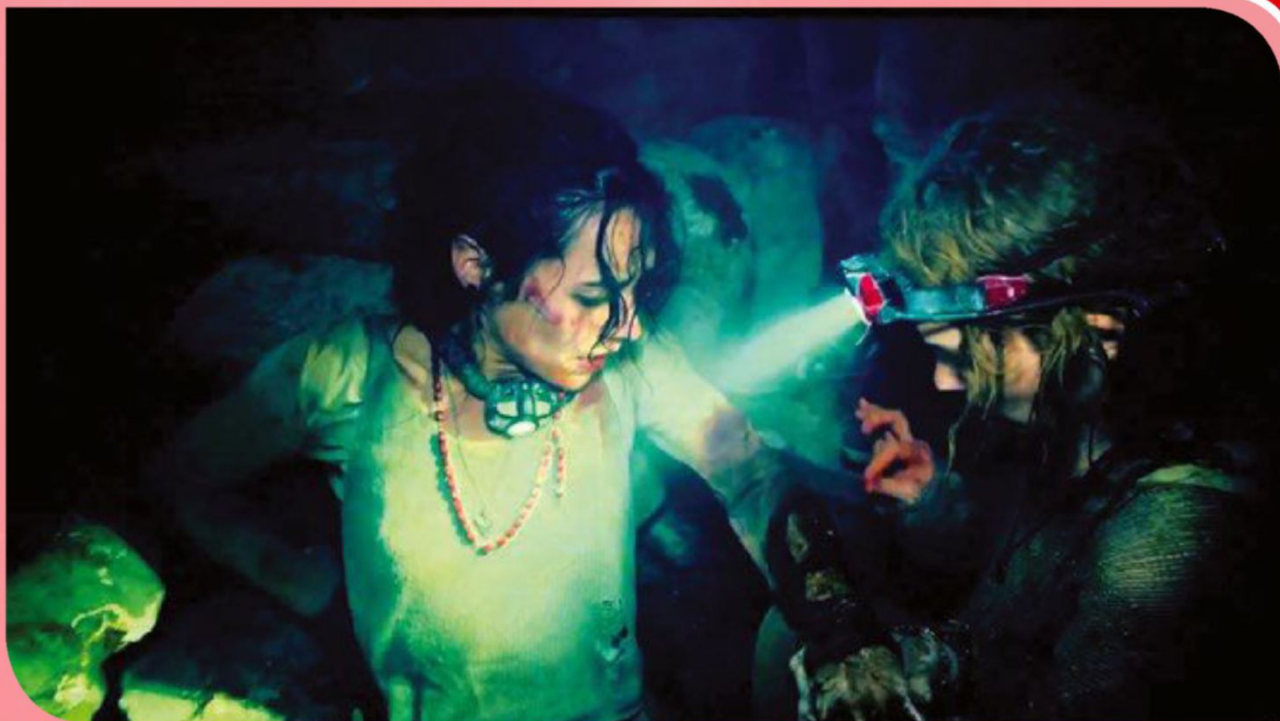
to hell in the usual way, through background events and visual details, the story remains a personal one with its focus on the emotional content. While some people's behaviour might seem unfair or illogical, nobody is judged for their actions as there are no rules for how people are supposed to feel in a situation like this. Through all this, the movie still finds time to play with expected genre conventions (the repeated mention of a minor character being from Haiti doesn't have the significance you'd presume) and include a great deal of perfectly timed physical comedy, mostly courtesy of Plaza's gradually increasing zombie behaviour.

Romantic comedies are more often than not tales of love lost and then found (and possibly lost again), and *Life After Beth* meets all the required story beats (including a prospective new girlfriend in the shape of Anna Kendrick) while seamlessly fusing them with the horror comedy theme without seeming trite or contrived. A difficult balance to strike but one that debuting director Jeff Baena manages to maintain.

ANDREW MARSHALL

EXPECTED ★★★★★ ★★★ 6

ACTUAL ★★★★★ ★★★ 8



AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JOHN ERICK DOWDLE / SCREENPLAY: DREW DOWDLE, JOHN ERICK DOWDLE / STARRING: PERDITA WEEKS, BEN FELDMAN, EDWIN HODGE, FRANÇOIS CIVIL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As Above, So Below takes us deep below the cosmopolitan streets of Paris, down to the mysterious, shadowy network of caverns and catacombs which crisscross beneath the city, home to the bony remains of six million luckless souls. Brainbox alchemy student Scarlett Marlowe (Weeks) leads a team of fearless (and fearful) explorers down into the tombs in search of the mythical 'Philosopher's Stone' which can turn base metal into gold and grant eternal life. Inevitably, they find themselves trapped and lost in the subterranean tunnels and, just to make matters worse, things start to get a bit supernatural. Luckily, they have fantastic HD cameras set into their head-torches so they can record everything that happens in pinpoint graphic detail...

Yes, we're in 'found footage' territory again - although for once there's no flimsy narrative conceit attempting to convince us that what we're watching is 'based on real events' and all that's left of our brave heroes is their cameras and the footage they've all been assiduously recording. As Above, So Below is a cut above many straight-to-DVD 'found footage' efforts purely by virtue of the fact that it is, at least, trying to do something a little bit different. In places it manages to evoke an uncomfortable sense of claustrophobia as Scarlett and her gang squeeze through tight rock crevasses, wade through narrow water-logged tunnels and find themselves apparently trapped in sealed chambers. *Quick, someone open a window...*

But where the film manages to play on our fear of confined spaces and airless rooms it's less successful in generating

horror *heebeegeebees*. Frantic shaky cam makes it hard to work out who's who and what's what and the concept of the catacombs recreating terrors and traumas from the gang's past doesn't amount to much more than a ringing telephone and a clunking piano. Desperate to up the scare factor, the last act turns into a fairground haunted house runaround. Scarlett and co are dashing through the tunnels which suddenly go mental; white-faced robed figures wander by, faces loom out of the walls and the air is suddenly full of disembodied wailing voices chorusing 'wooooooh'. We wouldn't have been too surprised to see a couple of extras with white sheets draped over them loom out of the shadows as a plastic spider hanging on a wire drops

from the ceiling. A quick cameo from Dracula and Frankenstein's monster would have rounded things off nicely...

In truth As Above isn't that bad but it does go wildly off the rails in its rush for the exit. There are some good ideas here and there in amongst the hokum but the needs of the 'found footage' gimmick inevitably leads to too much unfocused running about and screaming at nothing very frightening and not enough time spent generating any real tension or full-blooded scares.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ★★★★★★ ★★★★ 6

ACTUAL ★★★★★★ ★★★★ 6



STARBURST



THE GUEST

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ADAM WINGARD / SCREENPLAY: SIMON BARRETT / STARRING: DAN STEVENS, MAIKA MONROE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

With its purple-coloured title card and font seeming to invoke the spirit of *The Exorcist*, director Adam Wingard's latest psycho-thriller, *The Guest*, is like William Friedkin's masterpiece in that it is also a film about a demonic presence in the home. The

monstrous force here, however, comes not in the shape of an ancient deity occupying a young girl, but a polite, handsome but very intimidating ex-soldier.

David (Stevens) returns from fighting overseas with the aim of tracking down his

deceased best friend's family and offering a few comforting words about their boy's final moments. He immediately ingratiates himself into the household: the grieving mother needs a son substitute; the younger brother needs a protector from school bullies; the father needs a drinking buddy, and the daughter is captivated by the sheer mystery of the hunky stranger.

But much as in Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* and the more recent *Stoker*, Anna (Monroe) sees through the southern gent persona and grows increasingly suspicious of the dude, even if she thinks he's hotter than the sun.

Without an original bone its body, *The Guest* lifts from many movies, but does so with tongue-in-cheek brio. For example, that David is a psychotic fiend is less a twist

in the tale and more an inside joke shared between director and his audience. This set-up, therefore, allows for plenty of visual humour and for Stevens to turn in a performance relying as much on physicality as dialogue. David isn't really much of a talker, anyway. The vibe is a bit like *First Blood* meets *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers*.

Wingard's best film to date remains *A Horrible Way to Die*, but with *You're Next* and *The Guest*, he has shown he can deliver the goods to a mainstream audience. He and screenwriter Simon Barrett are on the verge of hitting the big time.

MARTYN CONTERIO

EXPECTED +++++++ 7

ACTUAL +++++++ 7



THE BOXTROLLS

CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: GRAHAM ANNABLE, ANTHONY STACCHI / SCREENPLAY: IRENA BRIGNULL, ADAM PAVA / STARRING: BEN KINGSLEY, ISAAC HEMPSTEAD-WRIGHT, ELLE FANNING, JARED HARRIS, NICK FROST, RICHARD AYOADE, DEE BRADLEY BAKER, STEVE BLUM, SIMON PEGG / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

You have to feel sorry for poor old trolls. If upstart wizards aren't dispatching them in Hogwarts' bathrooms, they are being outsmarted in Middle-earth by a hobbit or used as arrow bait by Legolas. Trolls' appearances in films have ranged from the cute singers in *Frozen* to the animalistic creatures in the absolutely fantastic *Troll Hunter*, but LAIKA animation has aimed for a mixture of the two in their newest stop-motion/CG/3D hybrid. *The Boxtrolls* is a film that gives you a reasonably straightforward story of weird being wonderful but there is far more going on behind the boxes than meets the eye.

The town of Cheesebridge (ruled by white hat-wearing,

cheese-tasting toffs) is ravaged at night by the sinister Boxtrolls, underground-dwelling, box-wearing scavengers who terrify the townsfolk. But when they steal a baby, the nefarious Archibald Snatcher (voiced wonderfully by Ben Kingsley) sets out on a long-term mission to exterminate the Boxtrolls. However, years later Whitehat leader Lord Portley-Rind's (Harris) daughter Winnie (Fanning) meets a young boy who lives with the trolls called Eggs (Hempstead-Wright) and is forced to rethink just how sinister these Boxtrolls really are and just what Snatcher is really up to.

LAIKA aren't known for offering sub-par efforts, their last two films – *Coraline* and

Paranorman – being visual and narrative wonders, but *The Boxtrolls* is the studio's most enjoyable yet. It's bound to divide audiences, with many likely to be a bit put off by some gross, dark imagery and intense moments, but it's also a cracking little family film, one that offers a rather affirming message of not excluding those that are different, as well as boasting some successful slapstick and yuck moments for kids and an equally wide world of discovery for adults, with the plot's ambitious reflections on the iniquities of the financial sector.

The animation is simply wonderful, blending stop-motion and moments of CG with grace and ease, making for a never less than impressive and full on-screen world. The film's clockwork precision makes it as charming as a little music box. *The Boxtrolls* themselves are splendidly rendered and given strong characteristics despite their dialogue consisting of baby-like talk and grunts (provided mostly by Dee Bradley Baker and Steve Blum). Brignull and Pava's screenplay does real justice to the source material, Alan Snow's children's novel *Here be Monsters!*.

Eggs (named for the label on his box) and Winnie are charming little outcast leads, the most accepting and open humans on display in the film. *The Boxtrolls* suggests that the real monsters are our preconceptions about others, and also those who abuse

authority (a powerfully relevant notion for a kids' film). And to that end the antagonist, Archibald Snatcher, is a truly show-stealing creation. Heinous both morally and visually, this Dickensian cross-dressing (yes you read right) villain is lent a seething arrogance by the almost unrecognisable vocals of the ever-brilliant Kingsley. In fact, everyone in the stacked cast (you won't believe some of the voices that were involved, come the brilliantly picturesque end credits) likewise makes their characters stand out in some way or another.

This is a film which delightfully bubbles with emotion, scares, humour and character, and while a mixed reception inevitably awaits – it has to be noted how strong it is for youngsters – a film with so much on offer deserves praise. It seems that early responses have been mixed simply because it's a bit... okay, a lot weird. Well, we say thank God for people like the folks at LAIKA, who not only make oddness appealing, but irresistible. *The Boxtrolls* just might be LAIKA's best yet, a low-fi animated belter in a year where animation (*How To Train Your Dragon 2* aside) has been tepid. You'll want to box it and label it precious.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED +++++++ 8

ACTUAL +++++++ 9



SIN CITY 2: A DAME TO KILL FOR

CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: FRANK MILLER, ROBERT RODRIGUEZ / SCREENPLAY: FRANK MILLER / STARRING: MICKEY ROURKE, JESSICA ALBA, JOSH BROLIN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For all of five minutes, Sin City 2 is one of the best 3D movies you'll ever see. As Mickey Rourke's Marv comes to in Basin City, regaining what passes for consciousness in his distinctly shaped head, we're treated to what must be some of the best imagery to ever grace a comic book movie. Marv busts heads, it starts to snow, and the audience breathes a collective sigh of relief – the lengthy gap between films has done A Dame to Kill For no harm at all. And then, as the title credits stop, so does the 3D. Like one of the film's omnipresent Cadillacs descending the long, winding road into Basin City, it's downhill from there.

A lot has changed since the release of Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller's Sin City in 2005. Comic book movies have gotten much better since

then, with the completion of Nolan's Bat-trilogy, the rise of the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the growing popularity of anything based on a graphic novel. That's not to mention Frank Miller's swift decline from favour, the dilution of the film's style with a host of imitators, and the fact that Rodriguez hasn't made a good movie since Planet Terror. The odds, then, were not in this sequel's favour.

As before, the movie juggles multiple characters, stories and time frames with relative ease. We follow Nancy (Alba) struggling in the wake of Hartigan's death, Dwight (Brolin) trying to control his own anger, pre-face op (no Clive Owen, then) and newcomer Joseph Gordon-Levitt as a hotshot gambler who gets in too deep when he beats crooked Senator Roark

(Powers Boothe) at poker. Marv is there too, popping up in each story simply because he was the first film's breakout character and that's what the filmmakers think the audience want. A number of other familiar faces new and old also crop up, to varying effect. Dennis Haysbert is a poor substitute for the late, great Michael Clarke Duncan, while Brolin is surprisingly bad. Dwight is presented as a completely different character here to how he was portrayed in the first film. And then they cover him in prosthetics to look like Clive Owen (just hire Clive Owen! He's not busy these days) and Dwight's story is buried under the sheer ridiculousness of it all. Christopher Lloyd and Ray Liotta fare better, however, and there's also Lady Gaga, for some reason.

On paper, there's no reason fans of the original shouldn't enjoy this entry. It looks identical – if not better – with the same use of music, colour, pace and tone, faithfully adapting the comic book story of the same name. The action is slick, the violence brutal and effective. In Boothe, it has a legitimately horrible villain, almost making up for the lack of Elijah Wood and That Yellow Bastard, transcending his paper-thin role to extend Roark's malevolence over the whole film. It is, at times, exactly as fun as it should be. Yet something, you feel, is missing (the 3D, perhaps, which is barely there beyond the title credits). The stories are smothered by the insistence on comic book style, the dialogue and characterisation sorely lacking, particularly where the womenfolk are concerned. As the titular dame, Eva Green is every bit as bad as Brolin. The camera leers at her, Nancy and the other female characters, while poor Rosario Dawson looks utterly ridiculous dressed in leather and a gimp mask. Oh, and the hooker dressed as Zorro is back too.

Sin City 2 is proof that you can be too literal in adapting a visual medium like comics to the cinema. Perhaps we're numbed to it, thanks to a slew of imitators, or perhaps standards have simply changed since 2005. Or maybe the film simply isn't very good. Whatever the case may be, this sequel is a sad, outdated disappointment.

JOEL HARLEY

EXPECTED ++++++++ 8

ACTUAL ++++++++ 6



DELIVER US FROM EVIL

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SCOTT DERRICKSON / SCREENPLAY: SCOTT DERRICKSON, PAUL HARRIS BOARDMAN / STARRING: ERIC BANA, ÉDGAR RAMÍREZ, SEAN HARRIS, JOEL MCHALE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Deliver Us From Evil is a crime drama/supernatural horror adapted from ex-cop Ralph Sarchie's book Beware the

Night. Based on real events – if you choose to believe them of course – the film follows Ralph (Bana) investigating

murders in New York.

Paired with his boisterous partner Butler (McHale), he encounters a series of strange, horrific events linked to a mysterious painter (Harris). A priest (Ramirez) tries to convince him that he is facing a different kind of evil and must regain his faith to combat it properly. At first Ralph dismisses this as nonsense, until he starts to see and hear things he can't explain and his family is threatened.

Creating an atmosphere of ever-present tension heightened with disconcerting music, Deliver Us From Evil

is incredibly creepy. The only drawbacks are that it assumes everyone buys into what's happening without question, and a rather silly and clichéd plot device involving The Doors. Otherwise, think The Exorcist if it was a cop film, with some brutal jump scares and a great performance from the rising star that is Sean Harris (who was also the creep in Creep by the way).

JONATHAN ANDERSON

EXPECTED ++++++++ 7

ACTUAL ++++++++ 7



THE ROVER

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: DAVID MICHÔD / STARRING: GUY PEARCE, ROBERT PATTINSON, SCOTT MCNAIRY, GILLIAN JONES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

David Michôd follows up his acclaimed, visceral 2010 debut *Animal Kingdom* with this stylish, bleak tale of obsession, hopelessness and brutal violence in a desolate and dusty Australia a decade after an unspecified disaster known as 'the collapse'.

Guy Pearce is Eric, a virtually monosyllabic loner galvanised into action

when a trio of on-the-run lawbreakers – we're never told what crime they've actually committed – steal his car after crashing their own vehicle. Eric salvages their truck and sets off in hot pursuit and he vows to recover his car even before a stand-off ends with him beaten unconscious. Back at the crime scene, Rey (Pattinson), brother of the

leader of the gang, is injured and bleeding. Eric and Rey fall in together and, with Rey patched up by a handy doctor, the pair join forces to track down Rey's brother and his gang – and they both have very different axes to grind.

The Rover is almost shamelessly a film of style over content. Michôd's near-future is a world of dusty desperation, a society clinging on to civilisation and yet slowly running down. We never find out if 'the collapse' is a worldwide catastrophe or merely an Antipodean apocalypse but it scarcely matters as it's really just window-dressing, a barely-referenced but handy background detail. The story is driven by Eric's relentless, sullen determination to get back what's rightfully his; he's very much a man who's been pushed to the edge and is now plunging over it. The appropriation of his car is the last straw and he'll let nothing and no one stand in his way as he and Rey cross the inhospitable Australian landscape in pursuit of his property.

Michôd's script is lean and sparse and what's left

unspoken is often of more significance than what is said. Pearce genuinely chills as the impenetrable Eric and Robert Pattinson is a revelation as the twitchy, drawling, troubled Rey. Evocative cinematography and Antony Partos' compellingly throbbing soundtrack help establish the tone and scale of *The Rover* but it's the film's aching sense of weariness and quiet dread which papers over the cracks when the already unhurried story slows to a crawl.

A fascinating and engrossing character study punctuated by sudden, blunt violence and yet with a tendency to drag its heels, *The Rover* comes off the rails in its very last scene, a real 'Surely not?' moment as the reason Eric's obsessed with recovering his car is revealed. It has laugh-out-loud potential and it will almost certainly dog your lasting memories of *The Rover* – a title given an entirely unintended double-meaning by its plain silly resolution.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 6



INTO THE STORM

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: STEVEN QUALE / SCREENPLAY: JOHN SWETNAM / STARRING: RICHARD ARMITAGE, SARAH WAYNE CALLIES, MATT WALSH, ALCYIA DEBNAM-CAREY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Inevitably audiences will go into the storm for one reason only: to be, quite literally, blown away by awesome special effects. And they certainly are awesome; even in an age when CGI can conjure up just about anything our imaginations might desire, this is raw, primal stuff, preying shamelessly on our fear of the uncontrollable, savage power of nature itself. Tornadoes and firenadoes whirl across the American Midwest demolishing buildings, sending cars and trucks hurtling into the sky and, in perhaps the most spectacular sequence of all, laying waste to

an entire airfield, huge aircraft spinning aloft, out of control, in a macabre metallic sky dance. It'll take your breath away.

The rest of *Into the Storm* might leave you feeling a bit less winded though. The film, breezily directed by *Final Destination* 5's Steven Quale, superficially appears to be trying to update the old 'disaster movie' template of the 1970s – think *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Earthquake*, *The Towering Inferno*, *Meteor* – but the end result is more *Syfy 'Movie of the Week'* than late summer big screen blockbuster. There are two basic problems

which leave *Into the Storm* windswept: the script has more clichés than a big box marked 'full of clichés' and no one seems quite sure whether (or even weather) they should be making a 'found footage' movie or not. The core of the film concerns the tireless determination of tornado aficionado Pete (Walsh) as he tries to make the definitive tornado documentary but everyone else is busily filming everything too, from high school kids working on their 'time capsule' projects to a couple of stoned redneck adrenaline junkies rushing about waving around their iPhones and Flip cameras. Throw in a bit of occasional CCTV footage and it seems that the film is trying to cover all bases in its desperation to appear homespun and authentic. But it's a device which quickly becomes tedious and silly and inevitably, when there's no handy on-screen camera about, the film has no choice but to just tell its story and get on with the action.

It's a relief that the visuals are so immersive because you really won't give a flying fig about the central characters and their off-the-shelf emotional turmoil. Richard Armitage's vice-principal (and widower) Gary doesn't get

on with his two teenage sons but he really steps up to the plate when one of them gets stuck in the cellar of a demolished building. Storm-chaser Allison (*The Walking Dead*'s Sarah Wayne Callies) is pining for the five-year-old daughter she hasn't seen for months because she's too busy chasing storms. Pfft, who cares? It's paper-thin stuff and it barely holds our interest as we wait for the next truck to fly through the air.

Into the Storm is a fantastically old-fashioned Twister for the 21st century (but considerably less boring), and almost commendably predictable, the very definition of 'does what it says on the tin'. It'll dazzle you, it'll amuse you (there's some good-natured humour here and there) and, in the end – because a big wind is still just a big wind and no matter how much chaos it causes it can get a bit samey – it'll probably make you feel that it's all been a bit of a storm in a teacup. More gust-see than must-see.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED ++++++ 7

ACTUAL ++++++ 6

THE LATEST HOME
VIDEO RELEASES
REVIEWED & RATED

REVIEWS



FILMED IN SUPERMARIONATION

BD + DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: STEPHEN LA RIVIERE / SCREENPLAY: STEPHEN LA RIVIERE, ANDREW T. SMITH / STARRING: GERRY ANDERSON, SYLVIA ANDERSON, JAMIE ANDERSON / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 10TH

This Christmas will see the second anniversary of the death of the astonishing Gerry Anderson, creator of a string of wonderfully inventive, timeless adventure series for children of all ages which pretty much defined the TV experience in the 1960s. The shows are nearly all iconic – Fireball XL5, Stingray, Thunderbirds, Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons – and they all starred sophisticated puppets brought to life by a technique Gerry himself christened 'Supermarionation'. Stephen La Riviere's wonderful, poignant and impressively thorough documentary *Filmed in Supermarionation* is the story of how it all began... and how it all ended...

In truth it's a story most Anderson fans will be more than familiar with. But any story is only as good as its telling and *Filmed in Supermarionation* is the definitive account of the glory days of AP Films, Century 21 Productions and a fantasy factory working out of an unassuming unit in Slough's dour industrial estate. Spines will tingle as Lady Penelope and Parker are brought back to life – voiced, as ever, by Gerry's ex-wife Sylvia and voice artist and legend David Graham – recounting the story of Gerry's genius from the comfort of an astonishingly faithful recreation of Jeff Tracy's International Rescue base from Thunderbirds. For the next two hours no stone is left unturned as we journey from the early days of AP Films, with Gerry and his hungry and ambitious team taking their first faltering steps in the

world of TV production. Approached by the formidable Roberta Leigh to produce a children's adventure series, Gerry, who appears in archive footage throughout the film, recalls how he "nearly vomited on the floor" when he realised he was expected to make Twizzle with puppets and models.

But from tiny acorns grew a formidable empire as Gerry's ferocious imagination created a succession of unforgettable, iconic children's adventure series, each show growing in scale, scope and confidence. *Filmed in Supermarionation* brings together many of the people who, alongside Gerry, made it all happen. Gerry's son Jamie takes some of the surviving puppeteers back to Islet Park in Maidenhead, the austere mansion home of Gerry's very earliest productions and, later, the Ipswich Road studios in the Slough Trading Estate where the more ambitious shows were made. Elsewhere other familiar names and faces turn up to share their memories of very special times, including Nicholas Parsons (voice of Tex Tucker in *Four Feather Falls*), Anderson regular Shane Rimmer, Elizabeth Morgan (voice of Captain Scarlet's high-flying 'Angels') and a rare sighting of Robert Easton who provided the distinctive voice of Phones in *Stingray*.

Backroom boys including Brian Johnson, Alan Pattillo, Desmond Saunders, Alan Perry, Mike Trim – familiar names to anyone who's ever studied the credits of any of Gerry's shows –

are on hand, all united in their opinion that Gerry was an "absolute visionary" who made the Century 21 phenomenon possible and who fought to make each of his shows bigger and better than the one which preceded it. But the film isn't afraid to touch on Gerry's less successful projects; the unexpected failure of the first Thunderbirds feature film (the forgettable second attempt, *Thunderbird Six*, is quickly glossed over) and the disastrous *Secret Service* which pretty much brought about the end of the Century 21 era.

Ultimately, it was the dawn of the new decade which brought down the curtain on Gerry's production empire. Tastes were changing, puppets were out of fashion and, in any event, Gerry was keen to move into live action production... but that's another story. Tales of the closing down of the Slough facility and the wholesale trashing of years of accumulated props, puppets and costumes created by Gerry and his team are genuinely heartbreaking, and not only to those who have to live it all again here for the camera.

Anderson fans keen to hear about the likes of *UFO* and *Space:1999* and Gerry's later efforts such as *Terrahawks* and *Space Precinct* may be disappointed, but the clue's in the title. This is all about those wonderful Supermarionation years, classic shows where "anything can happen in the next half-hour" (and frequently did). It's a tale told with genuine love and affection and with plenty of never-before-seen behind-the-scenes material, footage of Gerry and Sylvia on a 'fact-finding' visit to the States, a BBC TV documentary interviewing Sylvia and, astonishingly, the original Pathé news film story reporting on the German mining disaster which inspired Gerry to create *International Rescue* and *Thunderbirds* in 1964.

Filmed in Supermarionation is a remarkable achievement, a brilliantly considered and scrupulously researched love-letter to the work of one of the greatest innovators and storytellers of the television age. It can't be recommended highly enough and it's absolutely unmissable, not only for Gerry's legion of fans and admirers but for anyone who remembers or is fascinated by the glory days of British TV and one of its most exemplary and important pioneers. *Filmed in Supermarionation* is, to coin a well-worn but unavoidably apt phrase, nothing less than FAB.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★★★★10

STARBURST

DVD & BLU-RAY



WOLFCOP

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: LOWELL DEAN / STARRING: LEO FAFARD, AMY MATYSIO, JONATHAN CHERRY, SARAH LIND, AIDAN DEVINE / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 13TH

To break *WolfCop* down into its simplest terms, it's a movie that centres on an alcoholic deputy sheriff who turns into a werewolf. As far as plots go, it's pretty out there. Thing is, it's a ridiculously enjoyable movie that long-time fans of horror and black humour will enjoy.

Opening the film, we're introduced to Lou Garou

(Fafard), who is a waste of space, alcohol-dependent cop who has the respect of absolutely nobody. After experiencing seemingly just another blackout, it becomes clear that Garou has actually been used by some shady, dark arts types for something much bigger than any hangover. Discovering he has

heightened senses, it doesn't take long before we're treated to a practical-effects-heavy, visceral transformation that is very much in the vein of *An American Werewolf in London* rather than the sleek, soulless transformations of more modern fare. Managing to keep a relative understanding of what is going on around him, Garou sets out to get to the bottom of things, all whilst supping liquor and chowing down on doughnuts.

Now *WolfCop* could be taken as nothing more than a gimmick and just the latest in the line of movies trying to go for an odd angle in order to drum up some hype and attention. In fairness to Dean and his team, they have put together an absolutely brilliant flick that is tied together by humour, gore, and cheesy dialogue; its roots firmly in the dirty grindhouse-type horrors of the 1970s and '80s. For fans of those movies, *WolfCop* will tick a whole host of boxes. In fact, the titular character even gets his own theme song during the end credits. And you've clearly never lived until you've seen a werewolf in a cop's uniform

micturating on some no-good graffiti artists. Then there's even some interspecies erotica thrown in for good measure.

WolfCop is delivered tongue firmly in furry cheek, with the texture and ambience perfect for a movie of this ilk. Fafard seems perfectly cast as the everyman Garou and his hairy alter ego, whilst Jonathan Cherry's awkward charisma as best friend Willy regularly steals the film. Sarah Lind delivers a murky love interest, whilst Amy Matysio is great as Garou's fellow cop, bringing heart and innocence to a film shrouded in darker moments.

Credit goes to all involved for delivering a movie that has heart, humour, and hair aplenty. In the lead, we get a Canadian fur-ball that makes Wolverine look like a pussy cat, whilst the use of practical effects is a joy to behold. A mixture of '70s/'80s cheese with a hint of *Todd & The Book of Pure Evil*, *WolfCop* is a movie that is most definitely worth the hype.

ANDREW POLLARD

+++++ 9



HANNIBAL: THE COMPLETE SECOND SEASON

BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / STARRING: HUGH DANCY, MADS MIKKELSON, CAROLINE DHAVERNAS, LAURENCE FISHBURNE / RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 22ND

One of the best things to come out of television's newfound love affair with horror, *Hannibal* enters its second season, the good doctor still in session despite Will Graham's best efforts otherwise. The anticipated second season picks up where the first left off, with the troubled criminal mind imprisoned for Lecter's crimes. With Will now up to speed with *Hannibal* the cannibal's predilections, however, their little game of flirty cat and mouse is much less one sided. The game

is afoot. Mmm... Foot.

It's testament to the writing and direction how far we've got already. In spite of the series often feeling slow and glacial, producer Bryan Fuller takes care to ensure that each season finishes in a vastly different place from where it started. Compare this to *Dexter*, in which the serial killer remained (largely) comfortable in his job and home for a full seven series (dead wife and various stalkers

notwithstanding) or *Bates Motel*, which plays more like a family soap opera than *Psycho* prequel. Without veering into spoilery territory, Season Two of *Hannibal* never feels as though it is playing for time or padding things out for the sake of it. On the basis of this ending, Season Three looks like it could be its most interesting yet.

But let's backtrack a little. We open with Graham imprisoned for the murder of Abigail Hobbs, but confident in Lecter's guilt and his own ability to take the man down. An undeterred *Hannibal* continues to host his dinner parties on an episode-by-episode basis, while poor Crawford finds himself caught in the middle. Add to that the return of Eddie Izzard, emergence of the twisted Verger siblings and various serial killers popping up throughout, and we find *Hannibal* in rude health. Confident, unremittingly grim and darkly beautiful, it takes everything that worked in the first series and expands upon it tenfold.

Like a bleak version of the

Cumberbatch and Freeman double act, Mikkelsen and Dancy are great in their respective roles, both making the characters their own and sharing a weird chemistry that has since spawned a hundred Tumblr blogs. Mikkelsen does particularly well, breaking loose of Sir Anthony's shadow to create a wholly different *Hannibal*, as magnetic as he is dangerous. Of the supporting cast, Fishburne is a great Jack Crawford, while Michael Pitt is repellent as Mason Verger (a name many will recognise from Ridley Scott's *Hannibal*). The gruesome tableaux, chilly atmosphere, slow pacing and unlikeable characters will make it hard for everyone to get on board with, but everyone else should adore it. After all, when the alternative is soapy (*Bates Motel*) or ridiculous (*The Walking Dead*), intelligent, artistic television such as *Hannibal* is to be celebrated. As ever, we're left salivating for more upon its end. Delicious.

JOEL HARLEY

+++++ 9



WHITE SETTLERS

VOD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SIMEON HALLIGAN / SCREENPLAY: IAN FENTON / STARRING: POLLYANNA MCINTOSH, LEE WILLIAMS, JOANNE MITCHELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

You know, sometimes you're aware that you are just not welcome. The sophomore feature from Simeon Halligan (*Splintered*) preys on both that feeling, and a fear even more common: home invasion.

Ed (Williams) and Sarah (McIntosh) have moved into their dream home: Castle Farm, an isolated farmhouse with plenty of land in the remote Scottish borders. Although it's run down - the previous owner couldn't afford to keep it running and

eventually died there, the estate going to probate rather his family - the pair sees its potential and hope it will kick start a new life for them. On the very first night, however, their nightmare begins.

With its very simple premise, *White Settlers* manages to draw the viewer into its deeply disturbing and intensely terrifying scenario incredibly quickly. As the evening progresses, the couple endure fright after fright, each more nerve-wracking than the last

before they finally come under physical attack.

Although there's a fair amount of violence, *White Settlers* doesn't take the easy route of heading straight for shock value, scoring points instead by psychological means; through relentless tension and building anxiety. Which is not to say it doesn't have its average share of jolts and jumps, but wisely, they are applied sparingly.

Pollyanna once again proves herself as one of the best actors currently in the country, (the irony that she's actually Scottish isn't lost on us) and appears to be completely fearless with the roles she undertakes; it certainly won't be long until she is recognised as a major league player. Her character acts as both final girl and hero; rising from frightened victim to brave-hearted survivalist, while Williams' Ed seems to do the reverse. Sarah is certainly the most proactive person in the relationship!

Despite some outcry by some areas of the press, the film doesn't come across as merely exploiting the upcoming referendum to make Scotland independent from Great Britain,

but the timing of the release couldn't come at a more apt time, so who could blame the producers for playing on it for the promotion? The film doesn't in any way insinuate anything about the Scots; this is a tale of territories and entitlement, not politics, and could take place in any rural area the world over.

White Settlers exudes a quality not often seen in those of a similar or even higher budget. The daytime shots are stunning, presenting the tranquil surroundings at their very best (with the Peak District standing in for the Scottish borders), and while the bulk of the activity takes place at night, it is never so murky that one struggles to understand what's going on. If there is a fault, it's a common one; in that the trailer reveals too much (particularly in regard to Pollyanna's character). Despite that, it still packs quite a punch.

It's a film which benefits greatly from being seen on the big screen, so don't miss your chance on the short September run.

MARTIN UNSWORTH



8



KNIGHTS OF BADASSDOM

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JOE LYNCH / SCREENPLAY: KEVIN DREYFUSS, MATT WALL / STARRING: STEVE ZAHN, PETER DINKLAGE, RYAN KWANTEN, MARGARITA LEVIEVA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After several years in post-production hell (previewing at San Diego Comic-Con in 2011) this comedy-horror based around the cult world of costumed fantasy role players (LARP - Live Action Role Playing) finally reaches the public.

A group of friends, Eric (Zahn), Hung (Dinklage) and

Joe (Kwanten), are into the extension of the old Dungeons and Dragons type games. They dress up and inhabit the characters they have created. Eric has acquired a book through eBay, which he intends to use when they go to the big meet-up of LARP-ers. Joe has just suffered a relationship break-up and

has decided (due to his ex, Beth pointing it out to him), that he should grow up and start living in the real world. Well, he still has his career as a mechanic, and a heavy metal band anyway. His pals, however, have other ideas and shanghai him into attending the weekend mock-fight, *The Battle of Evermore* (they missed a trick not licensing the Led Zeppelin track!).

Reading from the book, Eric unwittingly summons a very real demon - a succubus that takes the form of Beth, whom it sees in a photograph Joe has brought with him - and is intent on destroying all in her path. The team are aided in battle by new love interest, Gwen (genre veteran Summer Glau).

As mentioned, the film has been a long time coming, and in that time, it seems plenty has gone wrong behind the scenes, not least the director Joe (Chillerama) Lynch being refused final cut. It's hard to say if the film would actually be any better or not, but the result we are presented with is patchy at best. There's plenty to enjoy; many of the gags

are spot on, and Dinklage is brilliant in a role which actually pre-dates his *Game of Thrones* fame. Sadly, the tone of the film is where the main problems arise. While we are happy to laugh at these deluded adults and their role-playing, when the violence and gore comes (and there is plenty of it), the juxtaposition is a tad jarring. There's a tonal issue with the fate of some of the characters, too, which certainly takes the humour out of the proceedings.

That said, it's an entertaining film, the effects work better when they are practical rather than CGI, as the computer-rendered gore just looks too false. The climactic battle with a giant behemoth summoned by the succubus is spectacularly bloody though.

It's certainly not perfect, but there's still a half decent romp to be enjoyed here, if approached with the right frame of mind.

MARTIN UNSWORTH



7



RPG

DVD & BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: TINO NAVARRO, DAVID REBORDÃO / SCREENPLAY: TINO NAVARRO, ARTUR RIBEIRO / STARRING: RUTGER HAUER, CIAN BARRY, ALIX WILTON REGAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The most surprising thing about this Portuguese science fiction film is that, in many ways, it is not as bad as it looks. Indeed, the concept is pretty ambitious. However, for all Rebordão and Navarro's good intentions, RPG (which somewhat disappointingly stands for Real Playing Game) is not quite as distinctive as it needs to be. A shame, because with some tweaks this could have at least been more fun.

The film sees an ill, rich old man, (the cheekily named, for all you Blade Runner fans) Steve Battier (Hauer), travel to a facility to take part in a 10-hour game with nine other wealthy participants. Their minds are transferred into younger bodies, and the aim of the game is to outlive your competition by the hour (if nobody dies in an hour, the game chooses one to eliminate at random) and the last person standing gets to reclaim

their youth. The concept may be similar to other films but the gender politics and morality that Ribeiro and Navarro instil into the film are very admirable. The fact that, once in the game, the participants have no recollection of who they really are is an intriguing touch (although not without its problems).

In fact, the film comes with some considered moments and is bookended by a very stylish (think TRON: Legacy but on a far, far, far smaller scale) opening and climax. Sadly, once the game progresses, cracks begin to appear. The ideas raised are simply that - raised. They are not explored enough and come the final twist, the whole film is rendered a tad pointless. The characters remain mostly nameless, although we know who Roy... I mean Steve's younger self is (Cian Barry), and that is another issue. The film only really presents this bunch of characters through thick young stereotypes (handy girl, promiscuous girl, Mexican, Asian, sex-obsessed douche, etc). Then there is the acting, which is wildly inconsistent, veering from dreadful to tolerable. Hauer is billed as

the lead but only really shows up at the start and finish and while there is fun to be had in Chris Tamisha's turn as The Gamemaster, character-wise there is little here to elevate this game.

RPG is not a particularly good film, but it does feel unfair to write it off entirely, as it has its plus points. It is a pity that it feels so forgettable come the end because in spite of all its faults, a few rewrites and some changes to the dialogue could have made all the difference. As it is, RPG is watchable but ultimately cannot escape a late-night throwaway vibe.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

+++++ 5



THE TOXIC AVENGER: UNCUT NUCLEAR EDITION

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: LLOYD KAUFMAN, MICHAEL HERZ / SCREENPLAY: JOE RITTER / STARRING: MITCH COHEN, JENNIFER BAPTIST, CINDY MANION / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Thirty years after he first jumped into view to a blast of Mussorgsky's "Night on Bare Mountain", Toxie is back, on Blu-ray. This simple tale of a weedy mopboy who falls headfirst into a vat of bubbling green goo and is transformed into an unlikely champion for justice put Troma on the map and is still a byword for bad taste and irreverence.

It's a film that does all sorts of things that shouldn't work but that somehow do. The mixture of

knockabout humour and bloody violence, of gross-out FX and skits that can trace their origins all the way back to vaudeville. The "Troma style" of acting, with the cast of crazed meatballs and spitefully vindictive bimbos - Bozo, Slug, Wanda, Julie - leering and gurning like gargoyles. It ought to be a hopeless mess, but instead it's like a Robert Crumb cartoon come to life, and it all adds up to a vivid, if warped, view of '80s

America, with its fitness freaks buffing up their own bodies while the world around them disappears under toxic waste.

It has scrubbed up exceedingly nicely on this HD transfer, which is generally very clean, with a little fine grain in some of the two-shots and just a couple of scratches. Most of the early scenes have natural-looking colours, but the real surprise is how rich and deep the night-time scenes are, especially the notorious hit and run of the kid on the bike and the Shinbone Alley sequence.

The disc comes with an alternative, longer (92 minutes) cut of the film, in standard definition only. Much of the additional material involves the sleazy mayor, but there's also some extra heavy petting between Slug and Wanda, an extended "Is This Love?" montage and a bit where Toxie's blind girlfriend makes him an oven cleaner sandwich. Nothing essential, but interesting enough. There's a mixed bag of facetious Troma-produced extras, the only one that really stands out being a 5-minute chat with Mark Torgl, who played Melvin the mopboy.

He reveals that the sheep he was supposed to kiss was unappetisingly infested with ticks and lice, and that during the location filming of the Shinbone Alley sequence the cast were accosted by a homeless person irked at having his bedtime interrupted.

The highlight, though, is the audio commentary by Lloyd Kaufman, which is much less flippant, and much more detailed and revealing than one might have expected. He talks about his love of the '40s screwball comedy director Preston Sturges (you can see it in the deleted scenes with the mayor) and is always ready with interesting nuggets of information about the cast, special effects and so forth - apparently Slug and Wanda got married and are now "running a theatre group in New York".

Extras: Audio commentary with Lloyd Kaufman / Alternative Japanese cut / Intros / Featurettes.

JULIAN WHITE

+++++ 8



THE CHANGES (1975)

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: JOHN PROWSE / SCREENPLAY: ANNA HOME / STARRING: VICTORIA WILLIAMS, KEITH ASHTON, RAFIQ ANWAR, DAVID GARFIELD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Children's dramas from decades ago are frequently being rediscovered by more mature audiences on DVD, and with *The Changes* the BFI are hoping to add another to a list that includes *Children of the Stones* (1977) and *The Owl Service* (1969/70).

Broadcast on the BBC early in 1975 in ten episodes adapted from the acclaimed trilogy by Peter Dickinson (actually published in the late 1960s in reverse chronological order), with surprisingly adult themes and ultra-modish camerawork

and picture composition, this is perhaps the missing link between the cult 1970 film *No Blade of Grass* and the 1981 version of *The Day of the Triffids*. In spite of a sparse script and equally sparing characterisation, *The Changes* nevertheless makes for wholly absorbing viewing.

The story begins immediately with the titular "Changes", a strange noise forcing people to turn violently against "wicked" machinery. Television sets are destroyed, kitchen appliances battered

and cars overturned, and when Nicky Gore (Williams) and her family attempt to flee the chaos they are separated; we then follow Nicky's story as she first falls in with a family of Sikhs and thereafter with Jonathan (Ashton), perhaps the most sympathetically played character in the serial, as gradually she undertakes a journey that will ultimately reveal the source of all that has happened.

The first of the three stories incorporated here is an allegory about the influx of Asians into British society and the adoption of a free European economic market, hot political potatoes when the books were written and remaining so when *The Changes* was produced, while the middle section is told against a harsh religious backdrop harking back to Michael Reeves' then-recent film *Witchfinder General*, and in the concluding segment we encounter the kind of then-prevalent New Age themes pre-empting Terry Nation's *Survivors*, transmitted later the same year. It's quite a heady brew and unlikely to be replicated in modern television, children's or otherwise.

What's most remarkable about *The Changes* isn't so much Anna Home's sparse scriptwriting as John Prowse's lucid direction, getting the most out of a roll call of unassuming but classy British character actors (including Bernard Horsfall, Edward Brayshaw, Jack Watson and Tom Chadbon), and a clean transfer from the film source reveals the considerable influence of 1970s cinema on the production. With a slightly more compelling screenplay this could easily have passed muster on the silver screen, rather than as deceptively fast-moving television.

Thoughtful yet energetic, evocative and challenging, *The Changes* is another great release from the BFI, and it's sure to find a place on the shelves of anyone with even a passing interest in stylish post-apocalyptic fiction, be it ostensibly for children or not.

Extras: Booklet / *At Home in Britain*, a short educational film.

JR SOUTHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



VARSITY BLOOD

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JAKE HELGREN / STARRING: LEXI GIOVAGNOLI, WESLEY SCOTT, DEBBIE ROCHON, BLAIR JACKSON / RELEASED: OUT NOW

As fans of disposable teen-filled slashers, we were hoping for something breezy, fun, gory and a tad sinister from *Varsity Blood*. The film centres on a group of jocks and cheerleaders who are a year removed from a dark accident that took the life of one of their friends. Just in time for the anniversary of this incident, people start to get offed by a masked figure. All sounds promising for throwaway slasher fans, right?

To be blunt, *Varsity Blood* is an atrocity of a movie. Everything about the film ranges from poor to embarrassing. A paper-thin plot is explored by a cast who seem to struggle with even the simplest of tasks. As well as the bad acting on show, the actual 'horror' when it does come is horrendously choreographed, without genuine emotion, and the film seems to spend a lot of its time seemingly ticking off a checklist of bad horror clichés.

But the biggest drawback of *Varsity Blood* is the characters on show. Yes, these are disposable stereotypical slasher fodder-types, but not a single one of them is appealing in any way. These highly unlikeable characters aren't helped any by dialogue that is obnoxious, grating and that offends on a whole host of levels.

Varsity Blood is a film that has a premise that feels at least two decades too late, although even if it was released in the '80s or '90s it would still be a dull, draining and soulless experience that is trying to pass itself off as an actual movie. Helgren's story is nowhere near strong enough to maintain your attention, the film's gore isn't plentiful enough to appeal to horror fans who dig the splatter, and you have literally nobody to root for. As well as a bunch of victims that you're happy to see offed, *Varsity Blood* doesn't give you a strong killer either. There's a kill in the opening scene, then there's not even a sniff of danger until a further 45 minutes into the movie's 80 minute running time.

If you like cocksure jocks, bitchy sluts, and horror-less

horror films, this effort may be for you. For the rest of us, *Varsity Blood* is a genuine struggle to watch. The only slightly redeeming feature is Troma vet Debbie Rochon, who does well as the mother of Lexi Giovagnoli's lead girl Hannah. When all is said and done, *Varsity Blood* churns out a formulaic effort that not even the biggest fans of the slasher subgenre will enjoy. The only thing equal to the struggle of watching the film in its entirety is trying to think of a movie in recent memory that has been quite so bad.

ANDREW POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 2





BOUND (1996)

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: THE WACHOWSKIS / STARRING: JENNIFER TILLY, GINA GERSHON, JOE PANTOLIANO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Three years before they took us down The Matrix's rabbit hole, the Wachowskis' took their directorial bow with this remarkably self-assured neo-noir.

Bound follows Gina Gershon's ex-con Corky, who is hired to renovate an apartment next door to mobster Caesar (Pantoliano) and his girlfriend Violet (Tilly). The two women soon embark upon an affair, whilst Caesar is entrusted with a suitcase full of the mob's money. The scheming pair devise a plot to simultaneously relieve him of it, and rid Violet of

the psychopathic Caesar once and for all.

Needless to say things don't go quite according to plan. As the bodies start to pile up, the increasingly in-over-their-heads Corky and Violet are forced to rely on their wits to survive – both in trying to outsmart the mob, and figuring out if they can trust each other.

On paper it sounds like any one of the production line erotic thrillers that were a mainstay of '90s cinema – lesbian sex, gangsters and graphic violence all feature prominently. But

Bound's a far classier affair, mainly thanks to a sharp script and direction by Andy and Larry (now Lana) Wachowski. They're aided tremendously by Bill Pope's superb cinematography, a terrifying turn from Pantoliano, and a pair of career-best performances from Gershon and Tilly. Yes, even better than Showgirls and Bride of Chucky.

Considering the size and sci-fi trappings of the Wachowskis' subsequent films, it's a lot of fun to see them playing in a different genre and on a smaller scale. A few brief interludes from other characters aside, it's essentially a three-hander between the main characters, with the action largely confined to the two apartments. Whilst there are some similarities to their biggest hit – a sharp, inventive script, Pantoliano playing bad, gun fetishism and characters who look far cooler in sunglasses than us mere mortals – anyone expecting another Matrix is in for a (very pleasant) surprise.

It also impressively doesn't overlay the more salacious aspects of the script. Bearing in mind this was only four years after the far more titillating Basic Instinct – and an era where there

were entire studios dedicated to producing dodgy erotic thrillers – the film earned praise from the LGBT community for its non-exploitative portrayal of lesbian relationships. Even the oft-discussed central sex scene doesn't come across as gratuitous. In fact, the most explicit thing on display here is the violence, with an early torture scene in particular proving rather squirm-inducing.

The 1990s produced a raft of intelligent neo-noirs, equal to anything produced during the genre's golden age. Bound is thrilling, ingenious and sexy, and up there alongside the likes of L.A. Confidential and Fargo as one of the best the genre has to offer. It's just a pity the Wachowskis' have never again focussed their considerable talents on the genre.

Extras: Audio commentary with the Wachowskis / Making of documentary / Interviews with Gina Gershon, Jennifer Tilly and Joe Pantoliano / Featurettes / Booklet.

IAIN ROBERTSON

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



DIRTY MARY, CRAZY LARRY (1974)

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JOHN HOUGH / SCREENPLAY: LEIGH CHAPMAN, ANTONIO SANTEAN / STARRING: PETER FONDA, SUSAN GEORGE, ADAM ROARKE, VIC MORROW / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We meet our anti-heroes Larry (Fonda) and Deke (Roarke) as they are pulling off an audacious ransom/extortion demand on an executive (an uncredited Roddy McDowall). This money will enable Larry to enter a NASCAR racing tournament on the other side of the country. But he has just had a one-night stand with a pretty blonde, Mary (Susan George), and he's not too pleased to see

her sat in the passenger seat of his getaway vehicle. She insists on tagging along, and with the police on their trail sooner than they'd hoped, they have no choice. Sheriff Franklin (Morrow – a great character actor, now more famous for losing his life – and head – while filming John Landis' Twilight Zone: The Movie section) is in lukewarm pursuit; outwitted at almost every turn, commanding his

troops from the air in the police helicopter (better to be in rather than under it, we suppose).

Cue ninety minutes of car chase action, interspersed with some fantastic humour and great, if not too OTT, crashes along the way. With a rough line in 'of its time' dialogue (he tells Mary to 'braid her tits' at one point), Larry is abrasive, selfish, and incredibly focused, although despite the methods, has only valid intentions at heart.

Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry almost epitomises the '70s Americana car-chase movie, despite being directed by a Brit (Twins of Evil's John Hough). There's no fat on these bones; it concludes as quickly as it begins, but that's not a negative. It's a dour, full stop of an ending that underlines the recklessness and single-mindedness of Larry and, indeed, a generation.

Without resorting to the slapstick of the later Smokey and the Bandit films, it still manages to be a whole lot of fun, cramming a few gags in among with the spills, thrills, and crashes. Fonda, already a pop culture icon at this point,

is suitably laid-back as the career-driven Larry, while Roarke (also a veteran of the bikesploitation movies of the time) plays his put-upon mechanic Deke with a weary, defeatist edge. Morrow's rogue sheriff really shines, eschewing the need of a badge or gun, his dogged pursuit of the trio gives the film a fun edge.

It's a great time-capsule film, almost forgotten in cinema history, but well worth seeking out, particularly as it's been released on DVD for the first time in the UK by Odyssey Video.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

★★★★★★★★★★ 8





ELECTRA GLIDE IN BLUE (1973)

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: JAMES WILLIAM GUERCIO / SCREENPLAY: ROBERT BORIS / STARRING: ROBERT BLAKE, BILLY GREEN BUSH, MITCH RYAN, ELISHA COOK JR. / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

'Big' John Wintergreen (Blake - later to star on TV as Baretta and as the creepy 'Mystery Man' in David Lynch's *Lost Highway*) is a motorcycle cop, working the long stretch of Arizona highway. As the squad gear up for the arrival of some hippies for a music festival, his mind is still on moving onto bigger things, namely the homicide department. Other than his aspirations, he stands out for a number of reasons: he's a nice guy, giving everyone

a chance and following the letter of the law, and he's also a full foot shorter than the rest. When a hermit is found dead of an apparent self-inflicted shotgun wound, John is convinced that it is murder, rather than suicide. A hard-nosed detective (Ryan) takes John under his wing on the investigation when they find he was shot in the back of the head before the shotgun blast to the chest.

An undisputed cult classic,

Electra Glide in Blue is one of those '70s films that just get better every time you watch it. Which probably isn't often, since it's rarely seen on TV in the UK these days. The beautiful photography by Conrad Hall makes the most of the remote regions of Arizona, with everything looking particularly breathtaking, the desert expanse surrounded by stunning, craggy rock formations. There are camera angles that come from Wintergreen's height, focusing on other character's mid-torsos, which give us even more empathy with the ambitious cop's stature, but for the most part, it's the unpretentious, often ponderous, direction that fully engrosses, practically mesmerising the viewer.

The film is full of pathos, as Blake's Wintergreen realises the life he aspires to isn't as glamorous as he'd imagined, nor the cops he looks up to any less corrupt or unscrupulous than his regular squad. Veteran actor Elisha Cook Jr. (*House on Haunted Hill*) is brilliant as the demented Willie, distraught friend of the dead hermit.

Although it's the only directorial credit for Guercio (he would later be behind AOR band Chicago, some of whom appear as gang members; notably Peter Cetera - yep, that fella who sang the theme to *The Karate Kid II*), it's certainly one to be proud of. *Electra Glide in Blue* proves that one man can make a stand, however tall he may be. Don't pigeonhole this, it's not a cop movie; instead it's as much a counterculture film of rebellion as *Easy Rider* and *Taxi Driver*. A forgotten classic, not to be missed this time around.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

★★★★★★★★★ 9



VAMPS

DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: AMY HECKERLING / STARRING: ALICIA SILVERSTONE, KRISTEN RITTER, DAN STEVENS, RICHARD LEWIS, SIGOURNEY WEAVER, WALLACE SHAWN, MALCOLM McDOWELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Despite, or perhaps because of, the ubiquity of vampires in the post-Twilight cinematic landscape, it's a huge shame that *Vamps* has taken nearly two years to make its bow on DVD here in the UK; it's a mostly very decent attempt by director Heckerling, reunited with star Alicia Silverstone, to recreate the success of *Clueless* from nearly two decades ago, filtered through a genre window.

The film begins with a montage sequence showing how Silverstone's character Goody was converted back in 1841 and leading up to the present day, filling in the background on her vampire flatsharing best friend Stacy (Ritter) and their eventual nemesis, the evil stepmother-type Ciccerus (Weaver, hamming it up outrageously). In two minutes Heckerling gives us more to chew on than

Stephenie Meyer managed in her entire saga. What follows is a basic New York after hours socialite romcom, albeit with all the expected undead trimmings, in the style of Heckerling and Silverstone's previous film, all of which kicks into gear when Stacy finds herself falling for the son of a vampire hunter.

And that's central as to whether you will enjoy this; if you liked *Clueless*, then *Vamps* will satisfy. For anybody looking for something more meaty, much of this might feel rather superficial - and anybody hoping for anything remotely resembling Meyer's work will probably be sorely disappointed.

The comedy here is somewhat hit and miss, with many of the gags a good twenty years out of date. However, there are plenty of genuine laugh out loud moments, and much of the satire hits fairly close to the mark. But what really defines *Vamps* is the performances. Stevens and Lewis are likeable enough as the love interests, and Wallace Shawn is just the right side of annoying as the descendant of the original Van Helsing. But

Silverstone, looking barely a day older than she did in 1995, is just as magnetic a screen presence as she was back then (Heckerling apparently brings something out of her that other directors can't seem to find), while Ritter, resembling a Goth Anne Hathaway, is a charismatic and sexy counterpart. They make for rather an odd pair, but their relationship is surprisingly convincing.

There's very little to mark *Vamps* out as a must-see film - for most it'll probably be a renter if it's something they'll bother to watch at all - but for the curious and open-minded it's unexpectedly rewarding, from the early scene-setting sequences to the knockabout final showdown with Ciccerus, and the very last scene in which Silverstone's Goody has to live with the big decision she and Stacy ultimately make is both simple and extremely affecting. Much better than you might be given to expect.

JR SOUTHALL

★★★★★★★★★ 8



EXTRATERRESTRIAL

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: NACHO VIGALONDO / STARRING: MICHELLE JENNER, CARLOS ARECES, JULIÁN VILLAGRÁN, RAÚL CIMAS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The cover blurb for Nacho Vigalondo's 2011 Spanish-language alien invasion rom-com describes it as "the funniest movie of the decade." We're not entirely sure which decade, of course; perhaps it's the 1760s. *Extraterrestrial* may be many, many things but, unless your sense of humour is extremely rarefied, it ain't "the funniest movie" of this or any other decade.

The set-up's actually got a lot of promise. After an apparently boozy evening, Julio (Villagrán) wakes up in a swanky apartment in Madrid with an attractive girl he can't remember meeting, much less... well, doing anything else with. Julia (Jenner) is keen to get Julio out of her apartment and, it seems, her life; but before he can make his excuses and

leave the pair notice that the city is remarkably quiet and the streets are deserted. Then they clock the huge Independence Day-style spaceship parked above the city and suddenly post-one night stand awkwardness is the least of their problems...

The alien invasion scenario is, in fact, a largely irrelevant backdrop to a very simple and occasionally quite sweet love story. Julia's lumbering husband Carlos (Cimas) arrives on the scene and creepy neighbour Angel (Areces), who clearly has a soft spot for Julia himself, realises that Julia and Julio are starting to become genuinely attracted to one another and decides that it's time Carlos found out the truth about his wife.

That's about your lot for *Extraterrestrial*. Any humour is wry rather than laugh out loud funny, derived from the quirky love triangle (potentially a rectangle) melodramatically played out against the alien invasion plot device. Julio and Julia are more concerned with their own budding relationship and the web of lies they

weave than the fact that the city's been evacuated and the human race might be facing extermination from nameless, unseen alien invaders.

Extraterrestrial's really not much ado about not much. It's inoffensive, occasionally charming and its conceit in relegating its alien invasion to little more than a subplot is cheeky and audacious even if it might irritate an audience who are expecting something a little more high-concept and a little less Richard Curtis.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★ 6



WEREWOLF RISING

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: BC FURTNEY / STARRING: MELISSA CARNELL, MATT COPKO, BRIAN BERRY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Werewolf Rising is BC Furtney's latest punt at horror following 2013's *Death Wish* knock-off, *Do Not Disturb*. As with his first attempt, Furtney directs his own messy script for youngblood horror company,

Ruthless Pictures. Low budget horror may very well be the lifeblood and foundation of the genre, but it's what's done with the budget that counts, and *Werewolf Rising* doesn't do an awful lot.

The characters have about as much charisma as dung beetles. Emma (played by *Humans Versus Zombies*' Melissa Carnell) is a recovering alcoholic returning to her childhood home town (yes, that old chestnut), a similar setup to the superior Spanish horror-comedy, *Game of Werewolves*. Matt Copko deadpans his way through the role of neighbour Johnny Lee, monotonously delivering lines without an ounce of irony.

The thin plot pootles along with a bland score, flitting between moody Americana that fails to tug at the heartstrings and a repetitive John

Carpenteresque piano piece. The effects are just as limp: the werewolf sees in a grotty red film, a precursor to uninspired gore effects and a disappointing transformation. The werewolf itself looks like a love child between *Predator* and *Dracula* and not half as fun as either.

Werewolf Rising fails as both horror and drama. At 76 minutes it doesn't require a huge time investment, but you'll probably want to avoid this one as a bitten man avoids the moon.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

★★★★ 3





EUREKA!
Classics



THE SOUL BROTHER
WITH BITE!

MORE DEADLY THAN
DRACULA!

HIS HABITS UNSPEAKABLE! HIS LUSTS INSATIABLE!
HIS FATE UNBEARABLE!

BLACULA

The Complete Collection



ON BLU-RAY & DVD THIS HALLOWEEN



f /EUREKAENTERTAINMENT

t /EUREKAVIDEO

YouTube /EUREKAENTERTAINMENT

EUREKA!

JOIN THE DISCUSSION ON THIS AND MANY OF OUR OTHER TITLES
ON OUR USER FORUMS WWW.EUREKAVIDEO.CO.UK

amazon.co.uk

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



much like old radio plays, wherein actors and foley artists create a dramatic programme for your ears. Season One episodes *The Hole Digger* and *Trawler* will be released in a limited edition double LP, limited to 500 copies in a gatefold sleeve with hand-stamped gold foil numbering. The first 100 copies will be coloured vinyl (red/black mix for *The Hole Digger* and clear/blue mix for *Trawler*).

While Cristobal Tapia de Veer's score for the first series of Channel 4's cult hit *Utopia* has been available from Silva Screen for nearly a year now, it's only just receiving a vinyl release. This month, you'll be able to purchase the score as a double LP – on yellow vinyl, naturally. Silva Screen promises that the score for series two will be out soon, as well. It's a strange, strange selection of music – much like the programme, which is a strange, strange selection of characters and set pieces.

Death Waltz Recording Co. finally seems to have a release set for Jeff Grace's score to the very excellent Ti West film, *House of the Devil*. According to label head Spencer Hickman, this was originally intended to be the first release from the label, but things have obviously delayed it a bit. The release will be available on picture disc featuring artwork by cover artist Tom Hodge, as well as a standard edition (or at least as "standard" as Death Waltz ever gets).

Dual Planet's been doing a smashing job of reissuing library music from the likes of Don Harper and Teisco over the last year or so, but it appears they've finally landed their first proper soundtrack, and it's a doozy. While a release date's yet to be confirmed, Dual Planet has as an upcoming release Brian May's work for the Ozploitation nasty *Turkey Shoot*. The composer, best known for his work on the *Mad Max* films, works in a squelchy

MotionSound Records imprint Terror Records Co. will release the Tim Krog score to the 1980 video nasty, **The Boogey Man**. It's a limited-edition pressing of only 500 numbered copies on 180-gram clear vinyl. The score's a really creepy bit of unnerving electronic music, and does an interesting job of bridging the gap between John Carpenter's minimalism in the '70s and the almost-danceable horror scores

that would come later on the '80s. Highly recommended for fans of Susan Justin's **Forbidden World** score and the like.

Deep Focus Records is a new label that is not releasing film scores or movie soundtracks. This is absurdly refreshing. Their first release will be a double vinyl LP for a pair of episodes from **Tales From Beyond the Pale**, the popular audio drama series. **Tales From Beyond the Pale** is



STARBURST

electronic vein on this release, which has been heretofore unreleased in any format.

Waxwork Records announced impending represses of their **Re-Animator** and **Day of the Dead** releases. They will have the same jackets and artwork, but will be pressed on different colour vinyl. It's a bonus for those who missed out on the label's first two releases, which have long since been sold out. Their first modern score release has been announced, as well – Jonathan Snipes' music for the film **Starry Eyes**. Snipes previously scored **The Shining** documentary **Room 237**, and this positively blows that out of the water – not a mean feat.

The label has also announced its first non-score release, which will be the sophomore LP from House of Hayduk, which features composer Mads Heldtberg (**You're Next**, **Cheap Thrills**), as well as Slayer's Dave Lombardo and Billy Gould of Faith No More, amongst others. The LP is due out in 2015.

Also upcoming is the first release of the Death Waltz Originals. The idea behind the imprint is original recordings from artists who produce music similar to the scores which Death Waltz releases. The first release is a collaborative effort between Umberto and Giallo Disco's Antoni Maiorovi entitled **The Hook & Pull Gang**. It's also a re-score for the original Tobe Hooper film **The Texas Chain Saw Massacre**, which will see screenings this fall as part of MondoCon and Beyond Fest in America. The sad side of this is that, while this is an absolutely amazing pairing of two of the finest synth underground artists working today, copies are limited to 800 on coloured swirl vinyl, and will only be available at these screenings.

Speaking of re-presses, One Way Static announced at the beginning of the month that "all versions of **The Last House on the Left**, **The Hills Have Eyes**, and **Cannibal Ferox** are now out of print and will not be repressed," and further explained that the choice was made because the label at this time wishes "to invest in new titles rather than re-pressings."

That being said, One Way Static did do one tiny repress of the **Last House on the Left** radio spot flexi. That flexi, available only with the limited-edition versions of the LP, was limited to 600 copies on clear foil, but One Way Static did 200 hand-numbered versions in custom sleeves for the Cigarette



Burns screenings of the Wes Craven films earlier this month. Any leftovers will be made available on the One Way Static website sometime in mid-October.

Music On Vinyl have released a slew of genre-related soundtracks in the past month. A brief rundown reveals some interesting selections. There's composer Fernando Velázquez's **Hercules** score on clear blue/black vinyl, Michael Giacchino's score for **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes** on "silverback" vinyl, Ramin Djawadi's **Game of Thrones: Season 4** on "Iron Throne" transparent vinyl, and John Ottman's score for **X-Men: Days of Future Past** on clear grey and clear blue vinyl. All are on 180-gram vinyl, and issued as double LP as a numbered edition of 2000 – except **How to Train Your Dragon 2**, which is an edition of 1000. **Dawn of the Planet of the Apes** is perhaps the one to which I look most forward – the way Giacchino references the original Apes films is masterful.

Simon Boswell continues to reissue his own scores, in a way that I find rather amazing. With so many labels to keep track of these days, it's refreshing to see a composer take things into their own hands. Much as he did with the release of **Hardware** later last year, Boswell will release his score to Michele Soavi's strange giallo slasher **Stagefright** via his own Flick Records. It'll be available at the beginning of October on clear vinyl, as well as limited edition picture disc.

In the digital realm, Recording Arts have released ninety minutes of Ennio Morricone music from the '60s and '70s. It's imaginatively titled **Ennio Morricone – Rare & Unreleased Soundtracks from the 60s & 70s**, and features the maestro's work for such diverse projects as the 1970 miniseries **Giovanni ed Elviruccia** and Lucio Fulci's **I due evasi da Sing Sing** from 1964.

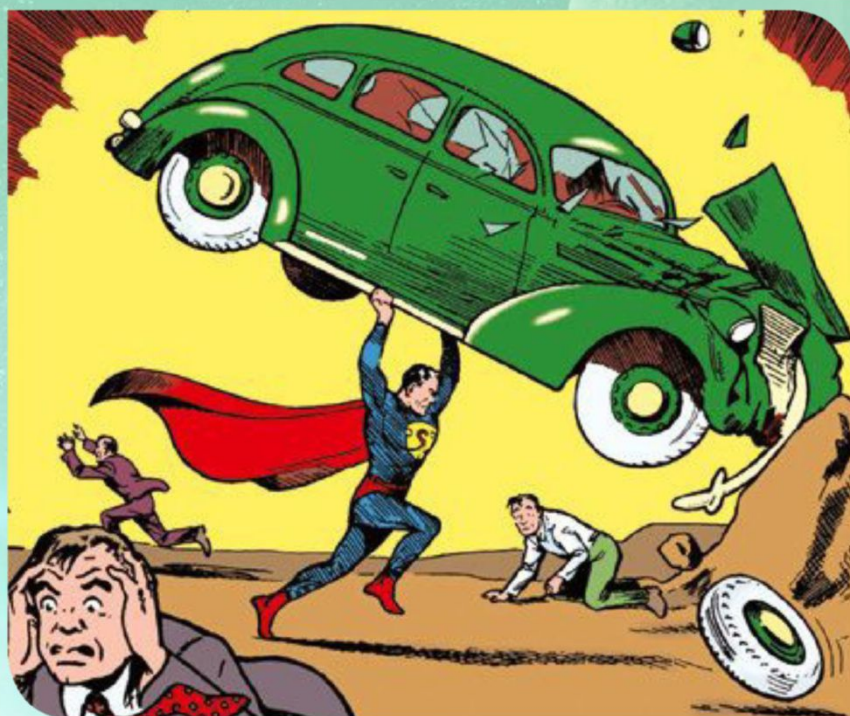
Finally, Chad Rugola, label head for Lunar Records, has promised a lot more interesting things down the pike, now that **Street Trash** and **Witchboard** are out and in people's hands. In addition to trying to secure merchandise rights for things like the **Night of the Demons** t-shirts, he says he wants to add a "hand-made element to it with screen printing and other design elements," when it comes to the label.

Rugola is also most interested in "music that has never been released before on any format or at least previously on vinyl," with an eye to making it as widely available as possible. "I love vinyl, but there a lot of people out there that don't buy it. Since the stuff I am doing has never been released before on any format, I am trying to give it to them in whatever physical formats are still currently being utilised. Currently, that's vinyl, CD, and cassettes."



BRAVE NEW WORDS

ED FORTUNE BRINGS
YOU THE LATEST
NEWS FROM
THE WORLD OF
GENRE LITERATURE



Superman Worth \$3.2 Million

A copy of **Action Comics No 1**, which featured the first appearance of Superman (and features the iconic cover of the Man of Steel lifting a car) has sold for just over \$3.2million. That's £1.9million for those counting in proper money. The comic book is in the most pristine condition possible, graded nine out of ten by the Certified Guaranty Company. This is because it was stored in a cedar wood chest at high altitude for most of its life. The auction itself took place on eBay and was organised by Darren Adams of Pristine Comics, who wanted to give the sale a truly global audience. The only other copy of this book known to exist in such a condition belonged to actor Nicholas Cage - it sold at auction for \$2.1m in 2011.

Harper Voyager Sign 15 New SFF Authors

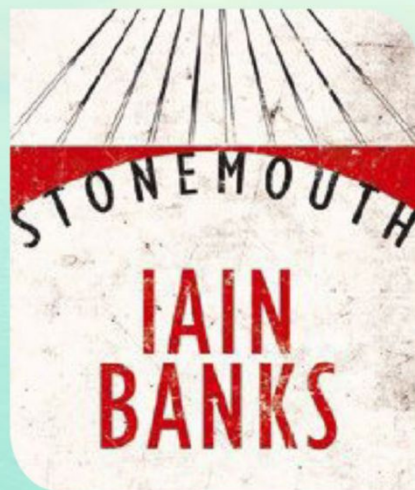
Thanks to a two-week open submissions process, Harper Voyager has now added 15 new authors to its list. The majority of writers were un-agented unknowns who sent in work to the HarperCollins imprint back in October 2012.

The titles will be released digitally with a short-run of paperback editions to follow. Voyager are planning to run a similar open-window in the near future, though they have not indicated what they mean by near.

Titles include a Young Adult novel about a meteor heading to Earth called **The Ark** by Laura Liddell Nolan. **The Rule** by Jack Colman is a historical fantasy set in a Viking-esque world. We are also intrigued by the brilliantly named **A Dead Elf** by Terry Newman. the entire list looks fresh and we look forward to the releases in future.

Amazon in 1984 Mis-step

As part of the on-going brawl between Hachette and Amazon over e-book pricing rights, Amazon recently released an open letter containing a quote from George Orwell. The quote was originally meant to describe his support for the rise of the paperback, and Amazon's public note placed this quote out of context. Orwell's estate hit back at Amazon's, accusing the online shopping giant of the "worse kind of doublespeak". Hachette has remained strangely quiet on this particular matter, though we note with interest that a series of online parodies of Amazon's original letter have already begun to surface.



Hugo Awards Reward Progressive and Forward Thinking Work

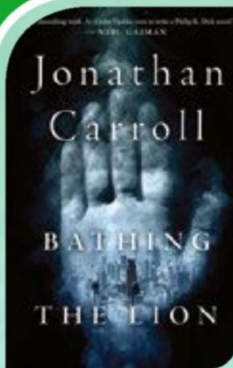
The Hugo Awards were announced as part of the 72nd Worldcon in London this August. Winners included Ann Leckie for her space opera novel **Ancillary Justice** and Mary Robinette Kowall for her novelette **The Lady Astronaut of Mars**. Kameron Hurley won two awards, one for best Fan Writer and the other for her essay *We Have Always Fought: Challenging the Women, Cattle and Slaves Narrative* which won Best Related Work. Controversially, no **Doctor Who** episode won this year, despite having plenty of nominations. The award for Best Short Form Dramatic Presentation went to the **Game of Thrones** episode *The Rains of Castamere* instead.

Iain Banks' Novel STONEMOUTH to Become BBC Drama

Production company Slate North has teamed up with BBC Scotland and BBC 2 to produce an adaptation of Iain Banks' 2012 novel, **Stonemouth**. It will be the first TV adaptation of the author's work since his death from gallbladder cancer in 2013. It's one of Bank's more mundane works, detailing the misadventures of Stewart Gilmour, a twenty-ish man who returns to his hometown after five years, only to discover that one of the local gangs has not forgotten or forgiven the sins of his past. Adaptations based on Bank's work have usually been very good, though we're still waiting for the BBC to tackle his sci-fi work.

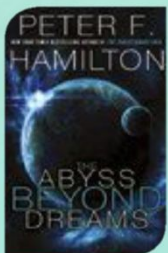
ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES

COMING SOON



BATHING THE LION

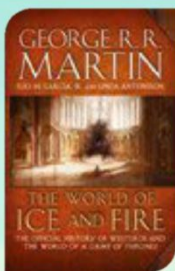
AUTHOR: JONATHAN CARROLL
PUBLISHER: ST MARTIN'S PRESS
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 1ST
Carroll's premise is simple: five 'cosmic repair men' find themselves in mortal shells, all aware that a terrible chaos is coming, one that could destroy mankind. At the same time, they have their mortal lives to deal with and all the things that humanity brings. Carroll is a master of the magical and dream-like, bringing the fantastic to the mundane. This could be very special indeed.



THE ABYSS BEYOND DREAMS

AUTHOR: PETER F. HAMILTON
PUBLISHER: DEL REY
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 21ST

Hamilton has returned to his gloriously detailed and extremely popular Commonwealth world with the first part of a new duology. Weighing in at 640 pages, *The Abyss Beyond Dreams* details the exploits of one of the founding members of the Commonwealth, Nigel Sheldon. Our brilliant yet hapless explorer finds himself embroiled in an alien conspiracy that may very well shatter the fragile peace that holds humanity together. Can Nigel destroy the terrible threat that lurks in a place known only as Void? We'll have to read it and found out.



THE WORLD OF ICE AND FIRE

AUTHOR: GEORGE R.R. MARTIN, ELIO M. GARCIA JR. & LINDA ANTONSSON
PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28TH

George R.R. Martin, he who would murder your favourite characters, is well known for being a huge fan of histories, both real and invented. So it's no surprise that he's produced his own, detailing the rich world of Westeros. This promises to be a lavishly illustrated book with a comprehensive history of the Seven Kingdoms, from the dawn of the First Men, to the rise and fall of the Targaryen family, up to the current age. Fans will eat it up and scour it for clues as to what to expect with the next *A Song of Ice and Fire* novel.

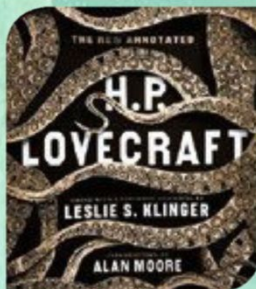


THE PERIPHERAL

AUTHOR: WILLIAM GIBSON
PUBLISHER: PUTNAM ADULT
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28TH

Gibson is one of the most influential sci-fi authors in the world today. Though better known for the genre defining *Neuromancer*, his recent work continues to break new ground. *The Peripheral* begins with a mysterious murder-by-drone in the year 2020 and then jumps one hundred years in the future to detail a near-identical murder.

The Peripheral promises to be a bizarre tale of time-travel, murder and death by machine and given that Gibson is the master of atmospheric techno-paranoia, this looks very good indeed.



THE NEW ANNOTATED H. P. LOVECRAFT

AUTHOR: H. P. LOVECRAFT & LESLIE S. KLINGER
PUBLISHER: LIVERIGHT
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 13TH
Compilations of Lovecraft's work are ten-a-penny these days, but good solid commentary is still an uncommon and precious thing. Lovecraft's influence can be felt keenly across the modern world of horror but the author's own story is rarely added to the mix. Klinger weaves a firm narrative, exploring Lovecraft's own life and influences as well as charting that heady sea of all the things the Mythos has touched.



FOXGLOVE SUMMER

AUTHOR: BEN AARONOVITCH
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 13TH

If you haven't been reading the excellent *Rivers of London* series then you really are missing out. This fifth instalment sees our favourite Metropolitan policeman and mystic Peter Grant leave the safety of his home city of London to investigate a series of potentially supernatural child abductions plaguing a small village in Herefordshire.

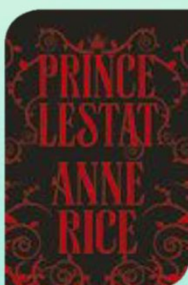
Will Grant be able to cope in a place with clean air and people who are actually polite to strangers? Time will tell.



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA VAULT: THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE SERIES

AUTHOR: PAUL RUDITIS
PUBLISHER: AURUM PRESS
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 23RD

Starting with Glen A Larson's 1978 series and running all the way up to Ronald D. Moore's retelling, the *Battlestar Galactica* Vault promises to be a comprehensive accounting of this epic tale of man versus machine. Paul Ruditis goes behind the scenes and talks to the minds behind the world of BSG, as well as exploring the show's impact on geek culture. Filled with full colour artwork, the book also features a double-gatefold cover that displays the entire *Battlestar* as well as some removable art. It should make for a nice addition to the memorabilia shelf.



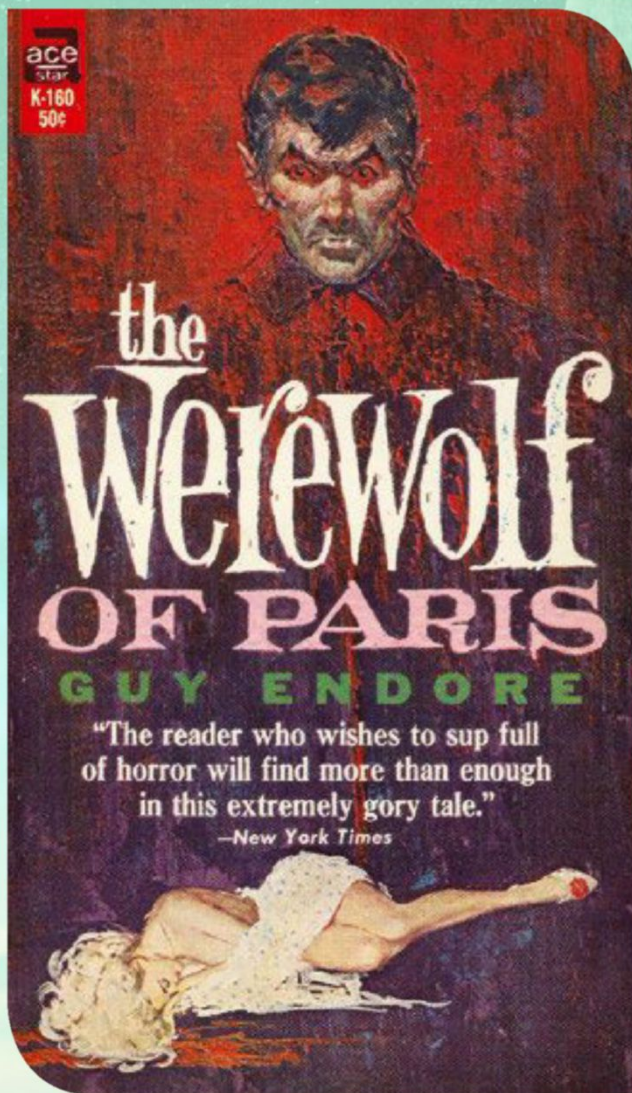
PRINCE LESTAT: THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES

AUTHOR: ANNE RICE
PUBLISHER: KNOPF PUBLISHING GROUP
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 28TH

Much like her central characters, Anne Rice's popularity seems unkillable and Prince Lestat is the latest in Rice's long running *Vampire Chronicles* series. This long awaited sequel to *Blood Canticle* (which at the time promised to be the final stake in the heart for the series) sees Lestat finally taking some responsibility and forming a brave new empire with not only his own race, but humanity as well. Expect a long list of your usual undead favourites and some new monsters to keep the roster fresh.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



It seems like every famous horror creature has its pre-eminent work of literature: made-up monsters have *Frankenstein* and vampires have *Dracula*; creatures of transformation have *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But what about one of the most famous creatures in the horror canon, the werewolf? For that, we have Guy Endore's *The Werewolf of Paris*.

The novel follows the life of Bertrand Caillet, who was unluckily born a werewolf in nineteenth century France.

Haunted by strange dreams and a string of suspicious accidents, he flees to Paris and the Franco-Prussian War, intent on overcoming his lycanthropy. But in a city full of temptation, and with his uncle hot on his heels, Bertrand's chances of succeeding grow slimmer every day.

Published in 1933, *The Werewolf of Paris* was written by Hollywood screenwriter and Oscar nominee Guy Endore, and is considered by many to be the werewolf novel, doing for werewolves what *Dracula*

did for vampires. I'm inclined to agree, although don't expect this book to be like the werewolves of the films you know. Werewolves have been a staple of folklore dating back to the Indo-Europeans, painting them as shape shifters or cursed beings (such as the Greek Lycaon) or men who dress in wolf hides. Some cultures say that werewolves exhibit physical signs of their condition in human form, such as a unibrow and curved fingernails, and others say they eat recently buried corpses. The traits we now associate with werewolves (the vulnerability to silver and transforming during the full moon) are actually a more recent invention, and it's this traditional werewolf that Endore depicts, although not necessarily as myth would have done.

One of my favourite things about this novel is the representation of the sympathetic werewolf. For a great many years, both fiction and folklore cast the werewolf as a villain, and while Endore does much the same (Bertrand does some horrible things), he is one of the first to show the werewolf as someone worthy of sympathy. Bertrand is born a werewolf, and can't help that, and we see how he struggles with first understanding his condition and then in containing it. Painting lycanthropy as a disease, which the novel frequently does, helps with that; a disease is often something that's outside of our control, something we can't be blamed for. Diseases also carry the possibility of eventual health—a cure. Hope is a potent element in making a character sympathetic, and this book displays its hope for Bertrand in spades, culminating, I think, in Aymar's tragic observation: lycanthropy is Bertrand's "misfortune, not his sin."

Another fantastic thing this novel does is talk about the connection between all human beings. Familial connection is explored throughout the

novel, its reach and depth and its various forms—biological, adopted and made - and the far-reaching nature of our actions, the ways in which every decision affects even perfect strangers, is a central theme. What is most poignant, however, is the connection Aymar draws between Bertrand and others, specifically Bertrand as a werewolf. Everyone struggles with something, like Bertrand struggles with his lycanthropy. Everyone has the capacity for bestial behaviour. And in fact, you could say that the werewolf has the upper hand, as he is aware of his darker nature and can try to fight against it. Many of us are not that self-aware, and in some ways our ignorance is far more terrifying than any supernatural being.

As for the style, I'm of two minds about it. The prose is clean, and the story is well-written and well-researched, but the format can never seem to settle on what it wants to be. At the beginning, Endore sets up what appears to be a story within a story - one story framed by a narrator's smaller tale. But we don't end with the narrator, and while the main story begins with Aymar's account of Bertrand's life the perspective shifts multiple times to the point that the set up no longer works. Aymar can't have known the private thoughts and moments of those other people to write about it, and nowhere is there an indication that his writings should be treated as unreliable. While the book is strong regardless, this sloppiness of construction does Endore's otherwise excellent talents a great disservice.

The Werewolf of Paris is a wonderful book, and even with its aforementioned flaws should be treated with the same attention as *Dracula* and other horror classics. It's frightening, grotesque, and heartbreaking all at once, and is more than deserving of a place on everyone's bookshelf. I know it's going to sit on mine for many years to come.

WWW.

ALL THE HEROES

.CO.UK

YOUR NO.1 STOP FOR ALL

YOUR CHARACTER APPAREL



TRICK OR TREAT

DO YOU WANT
TO SEE MY
MONSTER
IMPRESSION?



DO YOU WANT
TO SEE MY
ZOMBIE
IMPRESSION?



THE WALKING DEAD



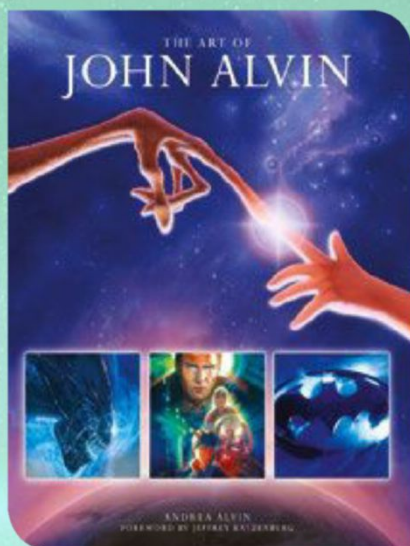
/alltheheroes



/alltheheroes

REVIEWS

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



THE ART OF JOHN ALVIN

AUTHOR: ANDREA ALVIN / PUBLISHER: TITAN /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

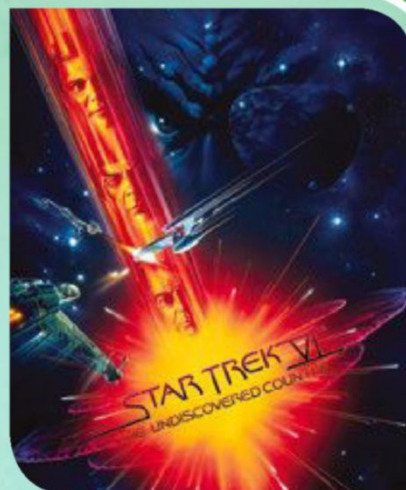
If you watched a Disney or fantasy film from the mid '70s to the late '90s, the odds are you will be familiar with the art of the late John Alvin. Not from the films themselves, but from the lush poster art that accompanied them. Spaceballs, Batman and so many more are represented here.

In a way, the great tragedy of this book is that John is not here to tell



us more about these works of art for himself. However, his widow Andrea does the best she can under the circumstances and gives a great deal of insight into the creative process (she would know, as she collaborated on several of the projects). This commentary adds a lot to the already magnificent images and really shows how well the couple worked together.

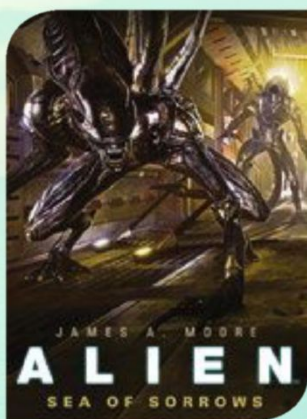
The book is not perfect. Among other things, it dedicates six pages to The Golden Child while giving just one to Blazing Saddles – although even there it's notable how well Alvin captures Eddie Murphy's grin in some of the concept sketches (the same



goes for all of the actors on the Batman Forever concept poster, especially Jim Carrey). Nevertheless, Andrea does dedicate a fair bit of the book to Star Wars, including an absolutely phenomenal pod-racing image, which goes some way to make up for that. But honestly, the best way to put it is this: the first night we got the book, we stayed up until the wee hours, unable to put it down. This is a must read for any fan of film and is the most complete celebration of Alvin's life and work you are going to find.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★ 9



ALIEN: SEA OF SORROWS

AUTHOR: JAMES A. MOORE
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The second in the new trilogy of books continuing the Alien mythos, Sea of Sorrows takes things in a fresh direction. In the far future, long after the events of the films, the Weyland-Yutani Corporation persists in its efforts to colonise new worlds. On the planet LV178, an accident brings Alan Decker into contact with the creatures that killed his ancestor during humanity's first encounter. Strong-armed into accompanying a team of mercenaries to a forgotten dig site, he soon discovers that he has a far more personal connection with these monsters than he ever imagined.

The story's biggest strength by far is its characterisation of the xenomorphs. Writing in a very

crisp and detailed manner, Moore approaches them in exactly the right way. He creates a very otherworldly feeling around them, distancing them from the tropes that have made them seem overly familiar in recent times. He offers just enough to make sure the reader knows what is going on, but at the same time leaves much to the imagination. It's easily one of the scariest depictions of the xenomorphs in decades, and helps the book significantly.

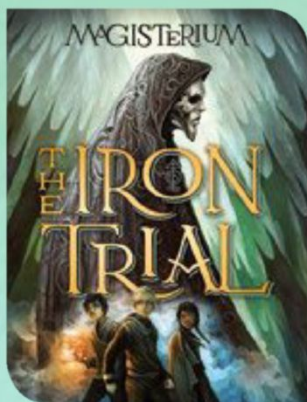
Unfortunately, Sea of Sorrows lets itself down in other regards. It regurgitates a fair number of scenes from Aliens, and many human characters serve only as cannon fodder. It's hard to develop any attachment to such stock figures. We get to

see things from the xenomorphs' own point of view, and while this is an effective storytelling tool at first, it rapidly opens up a vast number of plot holes and issues. Chief among these is that the xenomorphs are dominated by a universal consciousness, and that they consider Ripley (and anyone associated with her) to be the arch-foe of all their kind despite her only destroying a single hive.

While the novel tries to put a new spin on things, it proves in the end to be very hit or miss. It's certainly worth a read, but it's more interesting for its concepts and ideas than in its execution.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★ 5



MAGISTERIUM: THE IRON TRIAL

AUTHOR: H. BLACK, C. CLARE
PUBLISHER: DOUBLEDAY CHILDRENS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The sole survivor of a massacre when he was a baby, Callum Hunt grows up taught by his father that magic is dangerous and mages cannot be trusted. Despite his best efforts to be rejected, he is selected to study

at the Magisterium, the school of magic where fledgling mages are taught to control their power. While learning how to master elemental forces, he also discovers a mystery surrounding his very existence.

The first entry in a new series, *The Iron Trial* takes place in the modern day, but also creates a world of magic largely unseen by everyday people. As Callum ("Call") has grown up largely unaware of how this world operates, we learn of its intricacies at the same pace that he does. After being partnered with Aaron, a boy tight-lipped about his past, and Tamara, a girl from a successful family of mages and under pressure to succeed, the three of them learn the practical applications of magic and navigate the cavernous mountain labyrinth that will be their home for the next five years. The importance of friendship is a big theme and as Aaron and Tamara become two of the only real pals Call has

ever had, he begins to see that life has more to offer than anger at the hand it has dealt him.

The unseen series antagonist, the Enemy of Death, is a master of chaos, the destructive and dangerous fifth form of magic ("chaos wants to devour") that only an exceptionally rare few have the ability to wield. The instigator of the previous Mage War and responsible for the massacre that killed Call's mother, the Enemy and his concealed armies of possessed humans, manipulated animals and controlled elementals (collectively known as the Chaos-ridden) remain a constant and whispered threat, despite the shaky peace treaty that remains in place.

It's clear from the start that there is a Big Secret About Call, but in the best tradition of cryptic allusions nobody comes out and says exactly what it actually is (Call's father unfortunately deemed it unnecessary to let him know, or drop so much as

the slightest clue). You'll likely guess what it is, even if the book doesn't adequately explain how such a thing could come to be, and it poses interesting questions about how Call's character will subsequently develop.

Although its basic story elements are rather familiar – a power trio of central characters; a shadowy and nebulous enemy; a hidden secret; an arrogant and obnoxious classmate; an infatuated girl – *The Iron Trial* is merely a setup and introduction, and tacitly promises to take subsequent instalments of the *Magisterium* series in a more complex and philosophical direction, discussing things like the nature of evil, fate versus free will, atonement for past mistakes, and how our choices as young people shape the adults we eventually become.

ANDREW MARSHALL

+++++++ 7



ACCEPTANCE

AUTHOR: JEFF VANDERMEER
PUBLISHER: FOURTH ESTATE
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Acceptance is the third in Jeff VanderMeer's masterful, genre-hopping Southern Reach Trilogy. Perhaps the strongest of the three, it is concise but never robotic, intelligent yet never pretentious and frightening but always beautiful. As well as bringing the ambitious story arc to a conclusion, it provides a fresh context with which to consider the previous two novels, like a scientific discovery undermining a commonly held belief.

One of VanderMeer's strengths, and indeed one of the highlights of the novel, is the balance between the metaphysical and personal. As in its predecessors, the character development is both

subtle and devastating, making you contemplate many of the protagonists in different ways.

This time around, however, the novel makes room for a wider cast of characters instead of following a single unreliable narrator, painting a broader picture of Area X and the Southern Reach. The chapters are headed by characters' names, opening up with a second person narrative. While it's often a poorly deployed gimmick, VanderMeer uses second person to its fullest effect, just as Iain Banks did in *Complicity*.

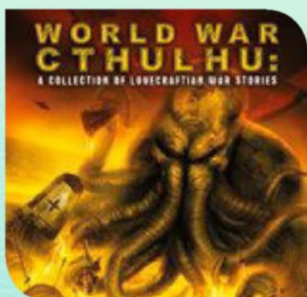
Despite the Phycologist, Ghost Bird and Control all being absorbing characters, it's the lighthouse keeper, Saul, who is perhaps the most compelling of

the entire trilogy. The grace and pathos with which VanderMeer tells Saul's story is enviable.

Acceptance is the most expansive of the trilogy, revisiting the past, pre-Annihilation, and going some way to explaining the strange phenomenon of Area X. Anyone expecting an out-and-out conclusion will be disappointed. It's a bold and daring novel which spits in the face of traditional structure, and it drives home the fact that *The Southern Reach Trilogy* is as much a concept as it is a fulfilling read; part H.P. Lovecraft, part J.G. Ballard, all VanderMeer.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++++ 9



WORLD WAR CTHULHU

EDITED BY: BRIAN M. SAMMONS,
GLYNN OWEN BARRASS
PUBLISHER: DARK REGIONS PRESS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Seeking to explore the idea of the Cthulhu mythos' impact upon a world in conflict, *World War Cthulhu* is a collection of twenty-two tales of eldritch creatures drawn into human battles. Covering a variety of settings from ancient Greece to the near future, each story asks itself what might be unleashed in the event of humanity going too far.

The variety of stories on offer is easily *World War Cthulhu*'s greatest strength. Each author furnishes a different kind of Lovecraftian monstrosity, ranging from unknowable horrors, to

unstoppable beings of war and even creatures the world has somewhat adjusted to. As a result, each story plays out differently, with some following a far more conventional horror route while others offer a more action-orientated style. There's a nice mixed bag of foes to choose from, with the Mi-Go, the Deep Ones and the squid-faced sleeper all putting in appearances.

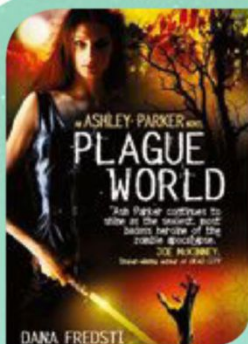
Unfortunately, the tales vary in quality too. Some only retain trappings of the Cthulhu universe rather than truly embracing it, with the monsters serving as generic doomsday

creatures. Similarly, few authors attempt to replicate the purple prose which made Lovecraft's works so chillingly memorable, opting instead for more modern styles. In combination, these problems make certain tales far too generic for such a unique world.

Despite this, *World War Cthulhu* remains an intriguing anthology. Any fan of the setting with an open mind should definitely take a gander at this one.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++++ 7



PLAGUE WORLD

AUTHOR: DANA FREDSTI
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The adventures of superannuated wildcard zombie-slayer Ashley Parker

come to a page-turning conclusion in *Plague World*, the third of Dana Fredsti's relentlessly enjoyable end-of-the-world horror trilogy.

Readers of the previous novels will know what to expect from *Plague Nation* and, in most regards, the book doesn't disappoint. The action is as frenetic and adrenalinised as ever, the text is studded with pop culture references (Shaun of the Dead, Doctor Who and Firefly all get a shout-out) and the book barrels along towards its action-packed conclusion. But the pace is a bit slower here, the text occasionally a bit more thoughtful. Ashley has some new problems to deal with; her bipolar fellow wildcard Lil desperately needs her meds

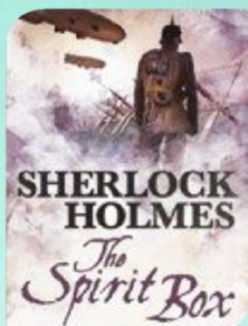
to keep her balanced and rational and new boy Griff is a potential sex pest. There's a lot more talking going on here, long scenes of characters sitting about in canteens and meeting rooms, before the book plunges headlong into its frantic finale as Ashley and co reach San Diego and find out the cause of and reasons for the virus which threatens to wipe out all mankind. We get a view of the bigger worldwide picture too, courtesy of regular vignettes depicting the viral outbreak in the UK, Japan, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia and the terror of those caught in the chaos and confusion; it never ends well.

For all the schlockiness of its storyline, Fredsti's book

is populated by four-square, well-developed characters, and its witty and naturalistic dialogue, throbbing action sequences and sky-rocketing high stakes ensure that *Plague World* is as effortlessly readable as the first two entries in the series. As the novel ends the world's still turning – just about – and Ashley Parker's still out there, fighting the good fight. The battle's won but the war still rages. It'd be a shame if we weren't invited along for the ride as Ashley continues her struggle with the undead hordes. Over to you, Dana...

PAUL MOUNT

+++++ 8



SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE SPIRIT BOX

AUTHOR: GEORGE MANN
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's World War One, and Holmes has been called from retirement by his brother, Mycroft, to look into three suicides. Watson is

alone in London enduring the war and missing his wife who is in the country. Holmes and Watson investigate and are soon drawn into the world of spiritualism and the mysteries of the human soul. What is happening at Ravensthorpe House and what is the secret of the spectrographic photographs said to capture a man's soul?

Although time has passed, leaving the Victorian era far behind, the London of Holmes and Watson is still recognisable, even if it has been embellished with motor vehicles and German air raids. The format of the story sticks close to tradition, as might be expected from a Holmes expert such as Mann. Holmes is mysterious and still a genius, Watson more measured, his reaction to events coloured

by recent experiences in his family (a nephew has died in the trenches). Spiritualism – a fascination of Conan Doyle's – is worked into the narrative without overdoing things.

George Mann has expanded the characters to include his own Sir Maurice Newbury. This gives a pivot point for the plot and allows the action to flow round the various locales, making this more than just a simple detective tale. Of course, there is a dénouement with all the players in the Diogenes Club and we expect nothing less. By the end, we have had all the staples of a great Conan Doyle tale and a respectable story with well-crafted updates to both Holmes and Watson. World War One is more than just a backdrop – not only does it provide a context

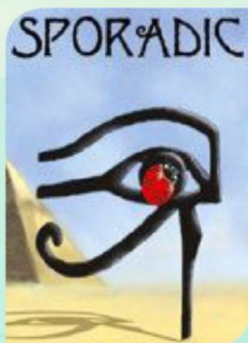
for plot strands to do with German spies, but it is also a very real presence.

Our only complaint about *The Spirit Box* is that it is over too soon. Fortunately, there is every chance that this Holmes and Watson will be back shortly.

The Spirit Box also contains a short story set in the author's other connected works, the world of Newbury and Hobbes. It tells of the pursuit of the mysterious Lady Arkwell and gives more insight into the figure of Sir Maurice Newbury. It is really an expanded anecdote, but it is entertaining and serves its purpose in raising the reader's curiosity as to these other stories.

TONY JONES

+++++ 8



SPORADIC

AUTHOR: KNEEL DOWNE
PUBLISHER: LULU.COM
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A slightly different offering this time from self-publishing phenomena Downe, but at the same time keeping many of the

same styles, and occasionally characters, that his fan base have come to love.

Sporadic is an anthology of ideas, a journey through the processes of the sci-fi punk's mind. Containing short stories, some of them very short, and rather impressively, actual poetry. This is from the man who created a futuristic rock band (The Phazelords, who feature within the pages of this collection) whose raison d'être was 'Kill All Poets'. It will come as no surprise to those who have read any of Downe's previous works, or indeed his Twitter feed where many of his stories originate, that his words work perfectly in this form of prose.

What will surprise some is the depth of some the writing this time out. As mentioned, this is a

collection of ideas, some which may not have actually worked out in the author's head at the time, but nevertheless are captivating and absorbing in their own right. Not every chapter takes place within Downe's VirulentBlurb Universe, but the ones that do feature some familiar characters, which is always a good thing and will keep fans going until the next trip to the place of Dream Cages, Wolf-Spliced Detectives and striking red-haired girls. Oh, and balloons.

There are chapters that proudly display Downe's wit and skewed view of the world, and in particular, the world of the literary community. The fourteen-point Manifesto being the most obvious, 'The Dictionary is not the Bible... It never was'; 'THERE IS NO PUBLISHER... You are the

publisher'; and - in a clear swipe at people like himself - 'Starting a Twitter account and declaring yourself a writer does not make you a writer...' We beg to differ in this case. Those who share a twisted, surreal sense of humour will also enjoy *The Adverse Calender* [sic], although you may never countdown to Christmas the same way again.

In many ways, *Sporadic* is Downe's most accessible work to date. In fact, it would be a perfect entre into his Universe. There's no more perfect time to dive in and enjoy some cyberpunk poetry and explore strange new worlds, and indeed, strange new words.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

+++++ 10

UNLEASHED AND AVAILABLE NOW ~ HORROR & MONSTER MODELLER

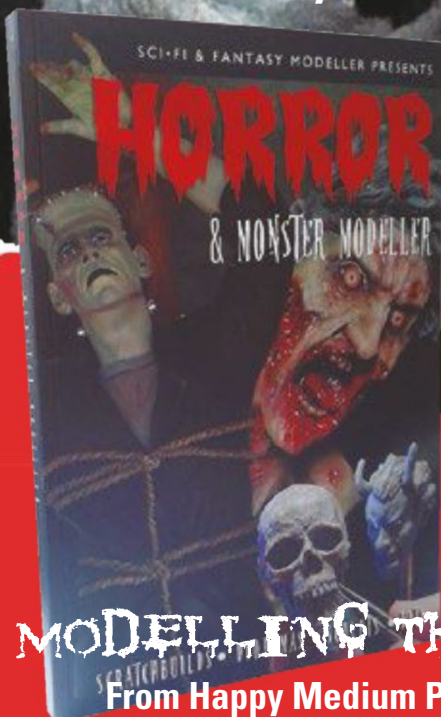
softback
144 pages
£17.95

Immerse yourself in a chillingly different hobby experience – bringing you a spine-tingling collection of features:

- Scary scratchbuilds
- Sinister sculptures
- Creepy conversions
- Diabolical dioramas
- Terrifying techniques...

Packed with builds and projects, illustrated throughout with hundreds of superb photographs, the **Horror & Monster Modeller** book is a 144 page roller coaster of macabre modelling, available to buy now in the UK and internationally at:

www.scififantasymodeller.co.uk



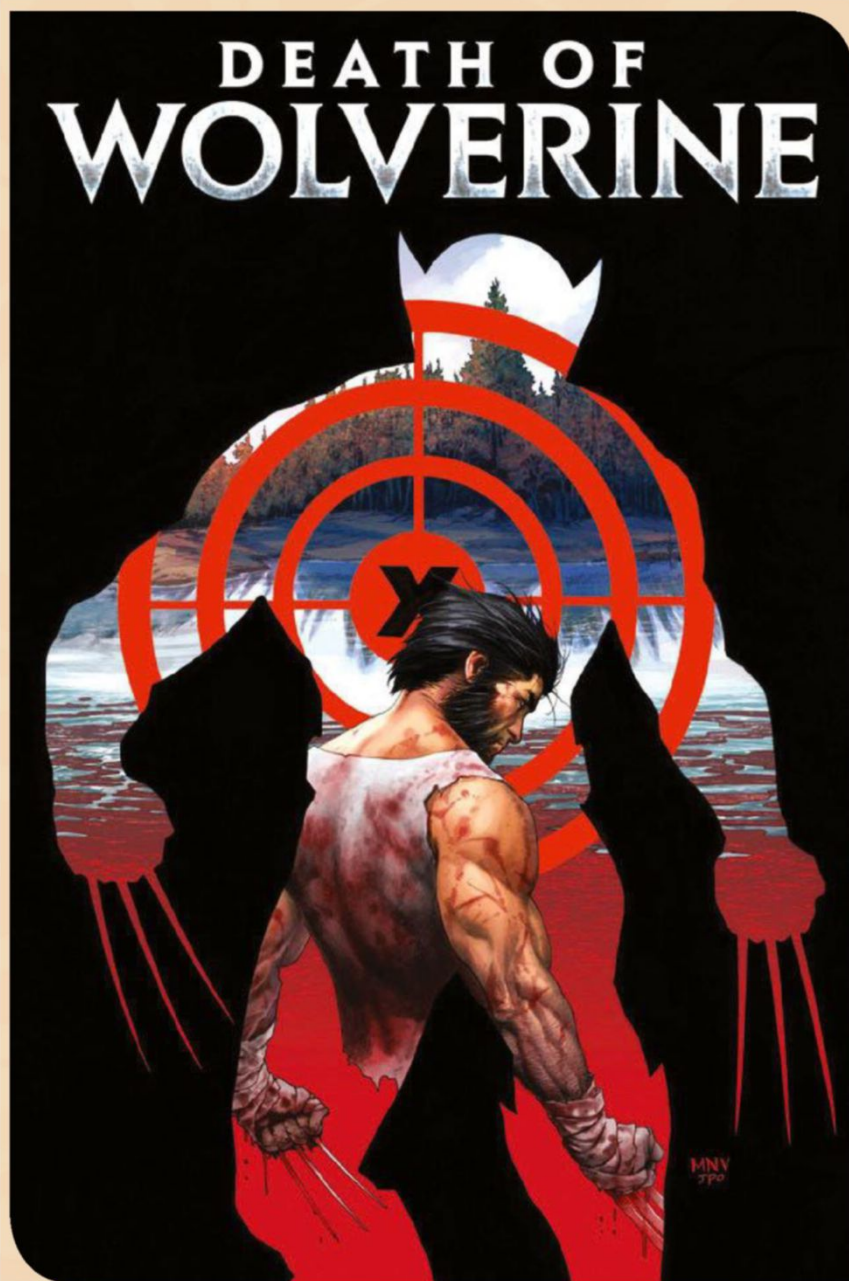
If you prefer to buy by cheque (UK), please send cheque for £20.45 (includes £2.50 p&p) payable to Happy Medium Press to:
10, Sparrable Row, Briercliffe, Burnley, Lancashire, BB10 3QW.

MODELLING THAT GOES BUMP IN THE NIGHT!

From Happy Medium Press – publishers of Sci-fi & fantasy modeller since 2005

VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS
MONITOR DUTY
TO BRING YOU THE
LATEST FROM
THE WORLD OF
COMIC BOOKS



characters. He's just peripheral enough that he might stay dead, too.

Unlike everyone's favourite X-Man, Wolverine, who continues his shuffle off of the mortal coil ('shuffle' being the operative word – Logan isn't half taking his time) in the almost-up *Death of Wolverine*. Marvel have promised us that the short tempered Canadian won't return until at least 2016. Coincidentally, that's just in time for a certain *X-Men: Apocalypse*. Two years being what passes for dead in comic books these days. Unless you're poor [REDACTED] that is.

Before he goes, Wolverine's been taking the time to 'connect' with X-Woman Storm, ensuring that there'll be someone to actually miss comics' most overexposed character while he's (briefly) gone. You can follow Ororo in her ongoing *Storm*, which started its run earlier this year, in July. Well, someone has to help fill the void left by dead Wolverine and his many, many comic book lines. He's the best there is at what he does – and what he does is fill shelves.

In other X-Men news, we have further information on the Miles Morales/X-Men crossover we told you of earlier this year. The X-Men in question are the All New ones (that's the original X-Men, bought forward in time by Beast in the hope of them talking Cyclops out of his newfound evil), flung into and scattered about the Ultimate Universe, alone and clueless. Thankfully, they have Ultimate Comics' most friendly resident to help them out, in the form of Miles Morales' Spider-Man. The universe's own villains aren't quite as welcoming, but, hey, this is the X-Men. They should be well used to this time travelling, dimension hopping madness by now. The story begins in *All-New X-Men #32*, hitting all good comic book outlets this month.

There's another vaguely Spider-Man related crossover to be found in the opposite end of the Marvel Universe, as the Guardians of the Galaxy (fresh from their barnstorming box office success) encounter Spidey's Venom symbiote in *Planet of the Symbiotes*. Due this November, the storyline will see the Guardians travel to a planet chock full of symbiotes, where Venom (Flash Thompson, now a member of the Guardians) will learn of the creature's dark origins, prior to it bonding with Peter Parker in *Secret Wars*.

Our final piece of Spider-Man news is the return of popular Alternative Spider-Man (the *other* popular one, who isn't Morales or Doctor Octopus) – Spider-Man Noir. As part of Spidey's crossover with his multiple selves, *Edge of Spider-Verse*

Put out the bunting, cut the cake and pop the champers (or, alternatively, commiserate as you will) for this month marks the first anniversary of my taking over viewership from the Watchtower. Beyond that, however, it's business as usual.

Or not, in the case of September's news. Following the excitement of SDCC, you join us on the month-long equivalent

of a slow news day, where both of the main houses are too engrossed in their big ongoing events to offer up much that might, you know, make sense out of context. That, or the massive spoilers. Marvel's Original Sins is basically one big spoiler as of now, with its biggest news affecting what threatens to be a permanent change for one of the Universe's mainstay

STARBURST

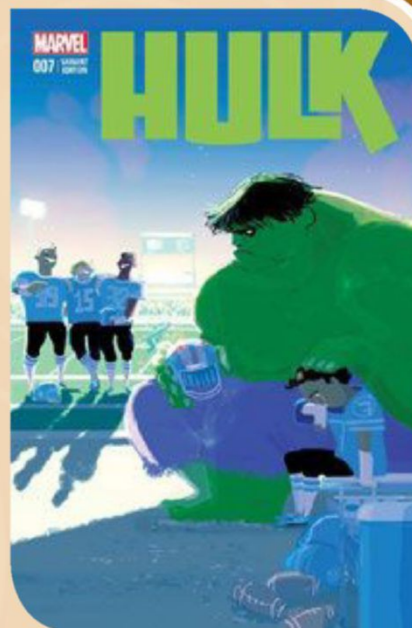


#1 sees Spider-Man 1939 join forces with his fellow Spider-Men to fight the oncoming darkness of Spider-Verse. Whatever that may be.

Meanwhile, in the DC Universe, the folk therein are engrossed in the ongoing *Future's End* event. So far, that entails a lot of beheading and dismemberment – because comics are gritty and adult – and Green Arrow growing a beard again. Sadly, that's not his '70s hippy beard, but something more dark and grizzled instead,



like Steven Amell's, in *Arrow*. The event kicks off with *Grayson* (where the ex-Robin and Nightwing is now playing spy) which re-introduces cult favourite KGBest into the Nu-52. KGBest, for the uninitiated, being the original Bane, star of the underrated *Ten Nights of the Beast*, and unfairly murdered in the otherwise decent Two-Face story *Face the Face*. For those same uninitiated – read it. It's honestly one of the best Bat-stories outside of the cult classics, and features one of Batman's coldest dismissals of a foe



since he half-heartedly tossed the Punisher into a pile of trash following an equally half-hearted fight.

Another old Batman villain is set to return to the fore this December in *Detective Comics* – masked pain in the ass Anarky, now recast as a dangerous V for Vendetta type. In this age of Internet sensations, selfies and rampant self-promotion, Anarky feels like a good pick for an update, being just obscure enough for a complete reboot to not put anyone's nose out of joint.

He'll fit right on in with the rest of our heroes getting involved with various causes this month. Over at Marvel, Captain America, the Hulk and chums are battling bullying in various variant covers, each of which sees the heroes comforting bullied kids. It's very sweet, but disappointing in its lack of Hulk 'smashing' bullies.

At DC, we see Batgirl (complete with her snazzy new costume) taking on the ALS Ice Bucket challenge, as depicted by writers Cameron Stewart and Brenden Fletcher, and illustrated by Babs Tarr. Archie Andrews of *Archie Comics* fame has also had a go, as have Homer Simpson and real-life persons Henry Cavill (in full Man of Steel outfit) and Phoenix Jones. On the off-chance you've not seen it all over your social media of choice, the challenge raises money for the ALS Association, which funds research and spreads awareness of Lou Gehrig's Disease. Because there are some things that can't be solved with a punch to the face.

Finally, scraping right to the bottom of the barrel outside of the main two, I bring you news that took the Internet by storm this month. I refer, of course, to the mind-blowing information that cultural icon Hello Kitty isn't actually a cat. I... look, I said it was a slow news day.

Joel Harley can be contacted at:
joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com
 and tweeted @joelharley



ALS, OR LOU GEHRIG'S DISEASE, IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON NEUROMUSCULAR DISEASES. THE ALS ASSOCIATION IS COUNTING ON YOUR DONATIONS TO HELP FUND RESEARCH TO FIND THE CURE.



FLETCHER/STEWART/TARR

REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



SALTIRE: ANNIHILATION - PART 1

AUTHOR: JOHN FERGUSON / ARTIST: CLAIRE ROE, LAUREN KNIGHT / PUBLISHER: DIAMONDSTEEL COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As Britain descends deep into the Dark Ages, Saltire is once again summoned to defend Scotland against devastation from invading forces. Anglo-Saxon ruler the Mercyan has called upon vampiric fae the Ban Sith to unleash a deluge of bloodshed and death upon the entire nation, and its Guardians, both mortal and immortal alike, must fight to avert its destruction.

Nowadays anyone should always be hesitant of uttering the word "dark," as the potency of this once compelling adjective has been irrevocably diluted by more than a decade of overuse regarding

teenage wizards and sparkling vampires. However, despite its ubiquitous excess, it really is the best way of describing Saltire's tonal shift.

Whereas the artwork of the previous volume *Invasion* was colourful, vivid and almost dreamlike, now it's as though the shadow of war that has descended upon the country has sapped its chromatic vitality, leaving it shrouded in a muted grey haze. The stark contrast, angular features, heavy shading and jet shadows are reminiscent of Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*, while the exponentially amplified volume of

gore and the unforgiving carnage take the story nearer the realms of horror rather than fantasy. Splattered blood, smashed skulls, pulped flesh, shattered bones and torn guts regularly stain the pages, while one memorable image of Saltire holding aloft a decapitated head with a dangling spine like Sub-Zero's death move hammers home the uncompromising brutality of battling supernatural monsters.

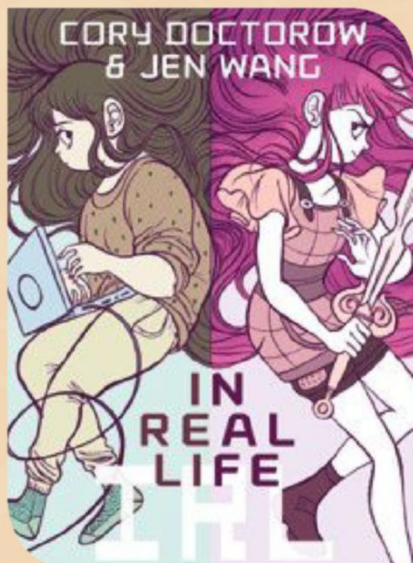
With the formidable build, terrifying beauty and uncompromising temperament of a bloodthirsty Celtic She-Hulk, the Ban Sith is pure personified malevolence; a lank-haired, corpse-skinned, razor-toothed, black-lipped, crimson-eyed nightmare made flesh. Revelling in the wanton slaughter like a house-cat toying with its prey, she traverses the country accompanied by her pets Cu Sith and Cait Sith (a monstrous undead wolf and equally hideous big cat respectively), joyously releasing a vampiric scourge in her wake.

We get to see more of the Guardians this time around and although they are different characters from those glimpsed in *Invasion*, we learn that upon ascension they inherit the name of their predecessor, as well as, it seems, their appearance. As the plague of undead gradually swarms north we come to know characters such as Loarn of the Hunters of the Fields, talking in measured and articulate manner even when facing an army alone; the smart-arsed Men of the Loch Guardian Trest ("Good company and a big fight. Could be a Scottish wedding."); and Talorgan, the Guardian of the Deep Forest Shamans, whose every spoken sentence is a cascade of alliteration, one panel also invoking Gandalf on the Bridge of Khazad-Dûm. The scope of Saltire's otherworldly setting is further expanded by including wailing washerwoman the banshee and cameoing mythological creatures like a giant water spirit and damned forest daemons, making you wonder just what else might be out there, crouching in the shadows.

Although the book (thankfully) doesn't end on a cliffhanger, the "part one" of its title promises a lot more to come. The Mercyan stated that the Ban Sith's campaign of terror and butchery is intended to "distract," so we can presumably expect to soon learn what plans of ruination the megalomaniacal warlord has put in place to destroy the nation.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



IN REAL LIFE

AUTHOR: CORY DOCTOROW / ARTIST: JEN WANG / PUBLISHER: FIRST SECOND / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 14TH

When Ana is invited to join an all-girl guild in a massively multiplayer online role-playing game, it changes her life. She becomes part of a community and grows in confidence as she learns that she is in charge of her destiny. A chance meeting with a young Chinese boy who happens

to be illegally using the game to make a living changes both their lives. This is the set up for Cory Doctorow's new graphic novel *In Real Life*. If this plot sounds familiar, then there's a reason for that: this book is based on one of Doctorow's previous short stories.

Cory Doctorow is probably best known as an activist for digital rights. He has written extensively about the way communication technology has changed the world and this includes explaining how the internet has been transforming the global economy. It should be no surprise that *In Real Life* also examines these issues.

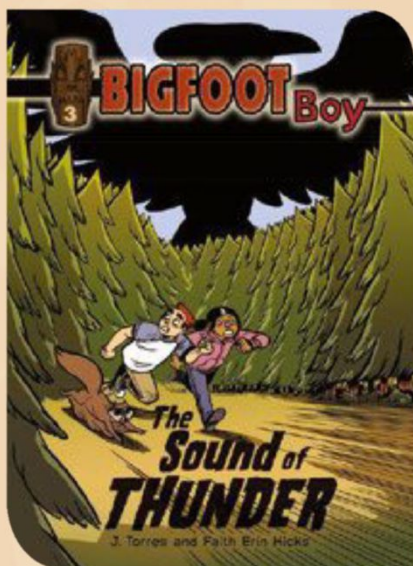
The story attempts to explain how a thing that most people do for fun has become a vital lifeline for others. Not only do we see how tiny compromises can make big changes, he also examines the cultural integration of video games. The narrative focuses on how Ana discovers various harsh realities in both the real and digital worlds and this allows the author to express his worldview without lecturing the reader too much.

Jen Wang's art is utterly charming throughout, being both engaging and beautiful. Though it looks simple, a great deal of thought has gone into each panel. From the muted yet detailed tones of the real world to the bright and strange illustrations of the online game, Wang really conveys the emotional impact of the piece. The art also helps keep the tale

grounded; if the art had been too stark then Doctorow's attempts to enlighten the reader would have felt too blunt. Instead Wang makes us care for the characters and therefore the issues they face. *In Real Life* is a great story with a social conscience, suitable for even the most casual of comic book readers.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★ 7



BIGFOOT BOY: THE SOUND OF THUNDER

WRITER: J. TORRES / ARTIST: FAITH ERIN HICKS / PUBLISHER: KIDS CAN PRESS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The *Sound of Thunder* is the third and (seemingly) final part in the *Bigfoot Boy* series, a charmingly old-school tale about a young lad who accidentally acquires the power to transform into a Sasquatch and wreak havoc.

The tale is pretty simple; Rufus, our titular *Bigfoot* boy, has lost the magical totem that allows him to transform into a Sasquatch. This is unfortunate because loggers and real-estate developers have plans for the precious Pacific Northwest forest that involves evicting all of the animals and turning all of the green belt land into cheap housing. Given that it's the job of the totem wielder to stop this sort of thing, Rufus has to find the totem again. That means dealing with bird-brained ravens, who are only interested in themselves. Luckily, he has his best friend and a highly competent squirrel to help him out.

The book's main central appeal is Faith Erin Hicks art, as it is rather lovely. It's deceptively simple-looking, though it's clear that a huge amount of thought and skill has gone into the various character designs, conveying a world filled with intelligent animals, spirits and ancient earth magic. Each page is a joy to behold and given how simple the actual story is, it's quite likely that the only joy many adults will get from *The Sound of Thunder* is how pretty it is. The ability to produce good, child-friendly cartoon art is an uncommon gift and Hicks' work is reminiscent of the likes of Charles Schulz and Carl Barks in places.

The Sound of Thunder is very much the end piece to a series that began with *Into the Woods* and was continued by *The Unkindness of Ravens*. As such it doesn't really work as a standalone adventure; a lot of the charm of both the characters and the situation is glossed over here because

it assumes the reader already knows the score. If you have a young reader in your life and you want to them to learn more about being friendly to nature through the medium of giant mountain monsters, then you should treat them to the entire series rather than this overly concise conclusion.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★ 6





FOREVER EVIL

WRITER: GEOFF JOHNS / ARTIST: DAVID FINCH /
PUBLISHER: DC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Forever Evil is the latest DC 'event book' by Geoff Johns. Comic book events are storylines that affect the entire range; in theory the events of Forever Evil will trickle down into every DC book that is unlucky enough to be part of the most recent in-

universe reboot, DC52.

It introduces a new version of The Crime Syndicate, the villainous, alternate universe version of the Justice League. Their arrival in the new DC52 universe was meant to be one of the big surprises of the recent JLA storyline. Sadly, because this was a fairly obvious twist (which long-time fans had seen before) and it actually made the whole thing a bit of a disappointment, the book continues both the storyline and the disappointment.

The core idea is sound; evil versions of the Justice League arrive, all with subtly different names and backstories, and they proceed to wreak havoc on mankind. Thanks to the events of the previous storyline, the actual Justice League is out of action and it's up to Lex Luthor to assemble a team of villains and rescue the Earth from this tyranny of evil. Despite the potential twists and turns here, nothing is new. Fans of Geoff Johns will recognise the sprawling plot lines and sketchy characterisation; on some level it feels like the writer knows that the audience knows much of the story already and Johns is taking the role of DJ rather than writer. This is a remix, rather than anything original.

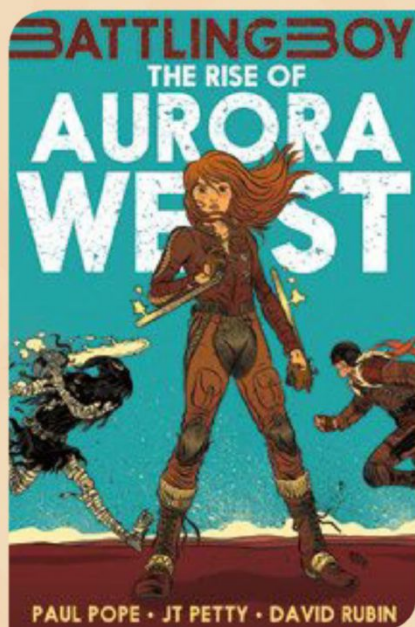
David Finch's art is unremarkable, which reflects the plot perfectly. As with much of the DC52 range, the artist is seemingly kept on a tight leash, producing good quality work. The action scenes are well conveyed, the storytelling is competent and well done, but there is no

distinctive spark here, no stand out panel. It does the job (and does it well) but no more than you'd expect from a major comic book title. Yet again, DC have delivered a book for the ageing fanbase, rather than something that new readers might enjoy.

ED FORTUNE



4



BATTLING BOY: THE RISE OF AURORA WEST

WRITER: JT PETTY, PAUL POPE / ARTIST:
DAVID RUBIN / PUBLISHER: FIRST SECOND /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Paul Pope's Battling Boy introduced us to an anarchic world filled with monsters and square-jawed action heroes. This prequel, The Rise of Aurora West, isn't

quite more of the same, being a more frenetically paced affair. It is a tale of loss and redemption as well as a fine comic book about a young lady beating seven bells out of monsters.

Aurora was always the most interesting character in the original Battling Boy book, and it seems that her creator, Paul Pope, agrees. The tale follows Aurora's childhood, from the early years where she learned that her parents were pulp-style action heroes to the events that led to her to following in her father's footsteps. Aurora is relatable, intelligently written and nicely handled. The plot is pretty straightforward, though there is a charming touch of Egyptian-style supernatural horror throughout, which is just gentle enough to be enjoyed by fans of spooky things of all ages.

Rubin's art is a complex mix of super-simplified cartoon joy and subtle fine details. It takes us to a world where the wrong squiggle in the right place can lead to total and utter disaster for everyone. This helps bring the milieu of Acropolis City into sharp focus; everything from action hero Haggard West's stylised car to monsters that are seemingly a cross between Muppets and sharks have been lovingly designed and thought out. The art is filled with clever little call-outs to the ongoing plot and works very well with the text.

This prequel is perfectly readable without any prior knowledge of the series and those new to Battling Boy will be fine

to start here. Stuffed with rocket packs, monsters, Egyptian mysteries, mild peril and lots and lots of punching, The Rise of Aurora West is a welcome addition to the growing number of books that can be enjoyed by pulp fiction fans of all ages.

ED FORTUNE



7



NOT DEAD YET.

FOR THEIR FIFTH SERIES OF WALKING DEAD, DST IS BRINGING MORE FAN-FAVORITE SURVIVORS INTO THE FOLD, INCLUDING RIOT GEAR GLENN WITH MAGGIE, TYREESE WITH PRISON MICHONNE, SURVIVOR MORGAN WITH GEEK ZOMBIE AND A RARE ONE-PER-CASE VARIANT SET OF MARTINEZ WITH GEEK ZOMBIE.

COLLECT THEM ALL!

THE WALKING DEAD

Minimates

SERIES 5

SKYBOUND
www.skybound.com

DIAMOND SELECT TOYS
www.diamondselecttoys.com

ART ASYLUM
www.ArtAsylum.com

COMING SOON LOCATOR SERVICE
COMICSLOCATOR.COM
800-600-0000

THE WALKING DEAD is™ and © 2014 Robert Kirkman LLC. Diamond Select Toys and Collectibles, the Diamond Select Toys logo, Art Asylum, the Art Asylum logo, Minimates, the Minimates logo are trademarks of Diamond Select Toys and Collectibles, LLC. © 2014 Diamond Select Toys and Collectibles. All Rights Reserved. Final product may vary.

PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



New SILENT HILL

In news to get extremely excited about, the rumoured Silent Hill reboot featuring Hideo Kojima is now bona fide fact. Not only that, but Guillermo Del Toro (he of Pan's Labyrinth and Hellboy fame for those of you living under a rock) has also signed on to work on the game.

We have to believe that the combination of these two minds is sure to create something absolutely terrifying. Kojima has already gone on record to state that he would be able to make the most terrifying Silent Hill game yet, simply due to the fact that he considers himself a bit of a scaredy-cat and a combination with one of the best horror directors of the moment with one of the genre's foremost names begins to look even more appealing.

Better yet, the pair released a trailer and a playable demo, both of which look as pant-wettingly terrifying as we all hoped they would. Keep an eye on this one because we reckon Kojima has the potential to produce something really special now that he is free of the Metal Gear Solid chains for a while.

Activision Movie Studio?

Well here's a venture that looks destined to fail. Rumour has it Activision are so convinced of the quality of their storytelling prowess that they are currently considering opening their own movie studio so their titles can be turned into films.

Ignoring the fact that most people play their biggest series for the multi-player, the simple fact is the company has not really produced anything of note from a storyline standpoint since the superb nuclear bomb scene in the first Modern Warfare game.

Given their propensity for succumbing to a touch of sequelitis, we can only envision this maybe pumping out a couple of Call of Duty films before realising that there isn't a market for what they are peddling. Apparently the idea is that it will work along the same lines as the current Marvel Studio setup, with TV shows and supporting films building up to really big blockbusters. It kind of helps to have the back catalogue of intriguing characters as well, but it looks like that won't deter Activision head Bobby Kotick, who is supposedly locked up in negotiations with a variety of studios at the time of writing.

COMING SOON



SUPER SMASH BROS.

PLATFORM: 3DS

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 3RD

Granted it's the WiiU version of the game that most players are going to be looking forward to, but the 3DS version is sure to be a decent title too. After all, Nintendo have yet to go wrong with the Smash Bros series and we reckon it's very unlikely that they will do so for a game that has so much killer app potential as this. The game is slated to be pretty much exactly the same as it's WiiU brethren, outside of a couple of graphical differences, so it may be worth making the decision now as to which one you are going to get.

Amazon to Buy Twitch

In a deal that is believed to be somewhere in the region of \$900 million it has been announced that Amazon has purchased the video game streaming website Twitch.

The site, which allows users to record themselves playing video games and encourages live streaming, has become one of the most popular websites in recent memory, with only traffic gobblers like Netflix coming ahead of it.

The move marks another step for Amazon in the expansion of their business portfolio away from its traditional online retailing and into other areas. It also provides the company with a ready-made source of information about an enormous swathe of the gaming market, which you can only assume will come in handy when it comes time to sell things.

We're just left to wonder what sort of changes Twitch will undergo now that it's in Amazon's hands. Advertising is pretty much a given, but in what form and how intrusive? Amazon needs to be careful not to alienate the ready-made customer database they have acquired so any changes should probably be small and should not affect the core service.

COMING SOON



PROJECT SPARK

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 10TH

Now this is an interesting one. Project Spark is being touted as a 'game maker' giving players a set of tools through which they can create their own games, movies and other stuff. Of course, as is the norm these days, this content can then be shared with other users of Xbox Live. Are we seeing the natural evolution of XBLA towards a more user-friendly development system that is available for those without programming knowledge? Probably not, but it will be interesting to see what players come up with.

COMING SOON



BAYONETTA 2

PLATFORM: WiiU

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 2014

Finally! Finally, the sequel to the amazing Bayonetta is nearly upon us and the WiiU is going to have a non-Nintendo exclusive that is actually worth shouting about. The first game was a sublime blend of fan service and action gameplay that would put Devil May Cry to shame and you have to think that the enormous gestation period for the sequel will have been put to good use. It will be interesting to see how the precise game mechanics work on the WiiU's odd control system, but this is really one to look forward to.

Microsoft to Release Xbox One Standalone Kinect

Because Microsoft are still absolutely certain that the Kinect is a thing that gamers care about, they have announced that they will be releasing the thing as a separate device for the benefit of all of those people who are buying the cheaper Xbox One model that doesn't come with it.

Disregarding the fact that they are likely buying that model because they don't care about getting Kinect, it does still show a somewhat admirable dedication to the peripheral.

To hammer the point home Microsoft claimed in a statement that, "Xbox One is better with Kinect, making games, TV, and entertainment come alive with premium experiences. The Kinect experience includes voice and gesture controls, biometric sign-in, instant personalisation, instant scanning of QR codes, and enhanced features only available with Kinect in games such as Kinect Sports Rivals, Dead Rising 3, Project Spark, and more."

Note the mentioning of all of these features that don't really have all too much to do with the reasons why most people would buy the console in the first place, though I can see some limitations when it comes to Project Spark being pretty annoying.

ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE Team Hit with Layoffs

Following the success of the Elder Scrolls Online launch and the general smooth running of the community in general, Bethesda has taken the decision to lay off a large portion of the staff that worked on the game because they are apparently now surplus to requirements.

While this hints at good things for gamers, who can feel relatively confident that Bethesda is able to handle any server demands that come their way through increased uptake of the game, you really have to feel for the developers who have helped create such an amazing experience only to be rewarded with the sack.

In fairness, it is part and parcel of the MMORPG development cycle, as the team is no longer required unless there's a new game to work on. Hopefully, each was aware of the situation before going in and has taken the precaution of lining up something new to go into. Plus such a massive game will be a huge feather in the cap of any developers on the hunt for a job.

Telltale Tantalises with New GAME OF THRONES Details

Telltale's much-anticipated Game of Thrones title is still in the works and the company recently released a teaser image that suggested the game will revolve around the actions of the Forrester clan.

Telltale's episodic format is perfectly suited to a world as rich in detail as GoT's and it is interesting that the company is looking to focus on a clan who have thus far been given little more than the occasional mention in the books. Perhaps this game will act as a true addition to the mythology of the world, rather than a retelling of what has come before.

ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY Pushed Back

Ubisoft have announced that the next title in their massive selling Assassin's Creed series is to be hit with a slight delay and won't come out until November 11th. That's still plenty of time to get the game in stores for the all-important pre-Christmas period and it most likely won't dent the overall sales of the game at all, seeing as it's guaranteed to shift units pretty much no matter what.

Ubisoft are claiming that extra polish is being added to the title as it's the first truly next-gen game in the series, which is always good news from a quality standpoint at least. Apparently some of the underlying game system has been rebuilt for the next generation so it will be interesting to see if Assassin's Creed genuinely has any new tricks up its sleeve this time around.

PERSONA 5 Details Released

It looks like the next in the superb Persona series is edging ever closer as Atlus has released a few details about the upcoming game following their intense milking of the superb fourth title.

With about a million games based around Persona 4 doing the rounds, it's about time a new game in the series was released and Atlus are finally pulling their finger out a bit. An official trailer is now available, showing a Harry Potter lookalike getting off the famous train, and a general release date of 2015 has been announced. It's looking likely to be a Sony exclusive as well, as the game is set for release on both the PS3 and PS4, with no other consoles mentioned as part of the announcement. Let's just hope Atlus don't decide to be contrary and not release the title in the UK!

COMING SOON



BORDERLANDS: THE PRE-SEQUEL

PLATFORM: 360, PS3, PC

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 17TH

Borderlands stands as one of the greatest games of the previous generations of consoles. Its sequel was pretty damned good too so we are anticipating some pretty good things from the oddly titled Pre-Sequel. This time around, the story will take a closer look at the history of Handsome Jack and will centre on his escape from the Hyperion Moonbase where he is in exile. Look for plenty of exposition as to why he turned into the monster he is in the second game, plus that brilliant Borderlands gameplay.



RESIDENT EVIL to be Rereleased... Again

So it's official. Capcom are bringing the first Resident Evil to a console near you yet again. This time we are going to be treated to a HD re-creation of the spectacular GameCube remake, but does the world really need this many versions?

The game is already available on the PlayStation (plus a director's cut), Saturn, GameCube, DS, mobile phones and there's an ancient PC version doing the rounds. Granted the GC remake offered a bunch of new content and this version will apparently add a little bit more but by now we are surely at the point where we want Capcom to make another decent main series RE following the abominations that were five and six.

RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS 2 Announced

Fresh on the heels of the Resident Evil HD remake, Capcom have also announced that they will be developing a sequel to the excellent Resident Evil: Revelations as well. Frankly, this is news to get much more excited about as Revelations was one of the better efforts for the series since the release of the fourth game, largely down to the fact that it eschewed the co-op mechanic that Capcom has become so fond of. Hopefully, this will continue to be the case with the second Revelations game, though we have a sneaking suspicion Capcom may try and shoehorn co-op play in somewhere along the line.

COMING SOON



SUNSET OVERDRIVE

PLATFORM: XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 31ST

In the latest effort from Insomniac Games players will be given control of an employee of FizzCo, which is the dystopian corporation that rules over the game world, as he battles against people who have overdosed on the drink provided by that company. Apparently, this turns them into insane lunatics so a variety of wall jumping and acrobatics will be required to take them down. Coming from the creators of the Spyro and Ratchet and Clank series, you can expect special things from this quirky title.

Nintendo Responds to Robin Williams Petition

In the wake of the untimely passing of comic legend Robin Williams, a petition has been doing the rounds to try to convince Nintendo to add him as a character into the forthcoming Legend of Zelda game. Williams' love of the series is well-documented, as anyone who is aware of his daughter is sure to confirm, and he has also been involved in advertising campaigns with the Big N in the past, so it's an idea that has legs.

Gamers are getting behind the idea too, with more than 100,000 names currently on the petition. Nintendo's attention has been caught as well and a representative recently had this to say about the idea: "Robin Williams was loved at Nintendo. Our hearts go out to his entire family, and especially to Zelda Williams who we've worked with multiple times. We appreciate the outpouring of support from the gaming community, and hear the request of fans to honour him in a future game. We will not be discussing what might be possible for future games during this difficult time, but we will hold our memories of Robin close."

You have to imagine that it is more likely than not that this is going to happen. As brutally business-like as it may sound, it would be a superb PR exercise for the company but beyond that, many gamers would see it as a fitting tribute to a true champion of the series. Come on Nintendo, it's not like it would cause much trouble to slot a character in somewhere!

COMING SOON



THE EVIL WITHIN

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC, PS3, XBOX 360

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 17TH

Survival horror is struggling to... well... survive in the current gaming climate. The Resident Evil series has become increasingly action oriented, even if the latest is apparently going to revert back to its roots, and games like Dead Space are few and far between. The announcement of new Silent Hill is a boost, but The Evil Within hopes get in there first and build a name for itself. The player takes control of a detective who is knocked unconscious while investigating a crime scene, only to awaken in a nightmarish world full of monsters. Sounds a little like Silent Hill actually and if it plays anything like that game it could be worth a look.

A FIGHTING FANTASY ADVENTURE

STEVE JACKSON'S

APPOINTMENT F.E.A.R.



**Choose your path through an interactive digital comicbook
where YOU are the Superhero or Superheroine!**



Download on the
App Store



ANDROID APP ON
Google play



Available on
kindle fire

Also available for PC, Mac and Linux on Steam and the Humble Store

Fighting Fantasy is a trademark owned by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, all rights reserved.

PREVIEW

WE TAKE A CLOSER
LOOK AT ONE OF
THIS MONTH'S
UPCOMING TITLES



ENDLESS LEGEND

DEVELOPER: AMPLITUDE STUDIOS / PUBLISHER: ICEBERG INTERACTIVE / PLATFORMS: PC, MAC
OS / RELEASE DATE: TBC

Billed as a spiritual successor to 2012's *Endless Space*, Amplitude Studio's *Endless Legend* takes the series' 4X action (that's eXplore, eXpand, eXploit and eXterminate to the uninitiated) from the annals of future deep-space to the distant-past and fantasy of legend.

Still in Beta phase on Steam's early release, the game is set on the dying planet of Auriga, and the factions that remain must build their empires, through scientific, political, military and economic means, to ensure their survival.

Seven of the eight major factions (see box-out) are now available to play, and they're a solid, varied bunch, each with their own particular strengths and weaknesses. They're supplemented by a host of minor factions (who are there for you to violently suppress, bribe or, heaven forbid, try a little silver-tongued diplomacy on (they'll set you a task that, once carried out, will result in the undying fealty of all the villages within that region - as opposed to just the targeted villages yielded from the less diplomatic approach). You can assimilate one minor faction (more if you research the correct developments) whose troop type you can then create. It pays to find a faction that compliments your own, in order to build a formidable army.

You'll start play on the map with a basic army (hero, two infantry and a settler unit - needed to build cities), and it's worth scouting about for an advantageous starting spot. It's no exaggeration to say that you can effectively cripple your chances of success with a few early, poorly thought-out decisions; not enough

food and your population won't grow, not enough industry and you'll take an age to build anything, not enough dust and you won't be able to support your empire economically and not enough science, and, well hell, you won't get the research done to read this sentence, let alone progress out of the dark ages... You'll also need to bear in mind the happiness of your empire (they get less happy as you expand), lest you have a rebellion on your hands and industry grinds to a halt. Fortunately, there are some handy city improvements to be researched and luxury boosters (from mined/extracted resources within your empire) that can help everyone start the day full of vim and vigour.

Your initial forces are limited, though

newer units become available through scientific endeavour, as do improvements in weapons and armour. Upgrading these is essential, even if your aim is to assert your will through diplomacy, as opposed to the sharp end of your boot. This leads us to by far the weakest part of the game as it stands - combat. You have some basic commands based on troop placement and who to attack but that's about it. There seems to be absolutely no logic as to which unit attacks first, often leading to a unit occupying a square and preventing a more powerful unit from getting the job done - a pugilistic cock-block if you will.

The tutorial wasn't available in Beta but will undoubtedly save newer players (and those already familiar) to the series hours of fruitless labour. The options are broad and it's obvious there's a lot of scope for replaying repeatedly, using not only different factions but on a myriad of terrain choices. Amplitude have also made a brilliant choice in removing research trees, enabling you to progress as you see fit, as opposed to the linear routes that are a staple of the genre.

It would be remiss not to mention the sumptuous artwork, it's beautifully realised and adds a true sense of fantasy to the game. The graphics portray the differing landscape, constructions and units well, capturing each faction's individuality.

The gameplay is smooth and fairly brisk (the 4X genre is notoriously ravenous of your time) and, aside from the currently weak combat, which we hope is bettered in the final release, this looks to be not only an improvement on *Endless Space*, but a worthy addition to the genre.

A JOHNS



ARDENT MAGES

Powerful magicians, taught to withstand pain so to better enable them to manipulate the powers of Dust. More than a bit freaky.



DRAAKKEN

Auriga's diplomats, though surprisingly tough. They value lore and wisdom over such mundane things as military might or wealth.



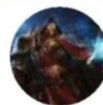
ROVING CLANS

Always ready to make some quick Dust, the Roving Clans are Auriga's wheelers and dealers. Peaceful, but only because it's good for business.



WILD WALKERS

An Elven race with a penchant for flipping out. They're industrious types using the forest to build their empires. When they aren't raging that is.



BROKEN LORDS

Dust dependent entities, best suited to conquest. Don't require food but population increase requires ever increasing quantities of Dust.



NECROPHAGES

An insectoid, hive-mind monstrosity that consumes all in its path. Diplomacy isn't their strong suit, turning enemies into food is.



VAULTERS

Masters of science, the vaulters are an ancient race with a mysterious past. Very strong defensively, they're hard to shift.



TBC

Still top secret at time of going to press. Hopefully by the time you're reading this full details will be available at starburstmagazine.com.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



LETHAL LEAGUE

DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: TEAM REPTILE / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Lethal League could only have been born from the insanity of the indie developer world. It almost immediately ditches all traditional genre conventions surrounding fighting titles and goes for something entirely different, effectively combining Street Fighter II with Pong.

Players are each armed with a single batting instrument with which to hurl a small baseball

around the screen. Striking the ball or successfully deflecting it will speed up its velocity and turn it into an attack for that specific player, allowing them to knock out those around them. With one strike being all that's required to out a player but offering multiple lives for various rounds, Lethal League revolves around extremely fast-paced matches; ones which

nevertheless build into tense, rapid *melées*.

While the basic gameplay is simple but extremely effective in its own right, Team Reptile wisely built upon it with elements that offer a great deal of longevity. Every character has their own unique moves which differ widely one from another, from Candyman's portal abilities to Switch being able to ride around an arena's walls and ceiling. This allows for some very surprising curveballs (pun intended), which can easily twist the game in a new direction and cause the flow of matches to completely turn against a leading player. Despite this, no one character has a skill which allows them to remain dominant over all others.

The graphics run at an extremely smooth sixty frames per second, but more importantly the game features an excellent netcode and fantastic multiplayer online support. It's enough to put the support shown for many bigger budget titles of its

genre to shame and, combined with the classic, arcadey aesthetic and an option for local multiplayer, Lethal League is a winning mix of the best elements of classic and modern fighting gaming. At its core it is pure, raw fun, just as open to casual fans as it is pro players thanks to its ingenious simplicity.

If it's not been made clear by this point, Lethal League is one of the single most addictive fighting games since Super Smash Bros. The game's very few shortcomings stem from a somewhat limited roster of fighters or from not pushing quite far enough in some regards, but there are no glaring failings in any area. Unless you have some severe allergic reaction to hip-hop soundtracks, this is a title you should definitely grab at the first possible opportunity.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 9



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS STARTER SET FIFTH EDITION

DESIGNER: MIKE MEARLS / PUBLISHER: WIZARDS OF THE COAST / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Fifth Edition of Dungeons and Dragons has a lot to prove. For the first time in gaming history, D&D is not the best-selling RPG, and this is (in part) due to various design choices that hampered the popularity of the Fourth Edition.

The Fifth Edition D&D Starter Set proves that Wizards of the Coast have learned from the mistakes of the past and are determined to dominate the hobby yet again. Old school fans may be pleased to learn that this introductory game

does not come in a vintage style red box, a very good sign as it means that the designers are relying on the contents within the box to sell the game, rather than people's nostalgia.

Inside the box, you get 32-page rulebook, an adventure book that is twice as thick, all the dice you need to play the game and some pre-generated characters. The rulebook covers the basics of roleplaying games and how you play them skilfully and clearly; anyone at all interested (but inexperienced) in the table top gaming world will be able to work it out quite quickly. The rest of the book covers the basic rules, combat and magic elements of the game. It's enough to get started and certainly more than enough to get hooked.

Next up is the adventure, which is worth the cost of the entire thing. Though designed to work with the pre-generated characters, it seems flexible

enough to work without them. The Starter Set doesn't include character creation rules (you have to wait for the Player's Handbook for that), but the provided adventurers seem good enough for beginners and experienced types alike. The adventure is a nice mix of classic styling and modern design. It has plenty of villagers to meet, monsters to fight, wild animals to deal with and horrors to run away from. However, this is set up in a pretty freeform way, allowing the players to get into the game at their own pace. There's weeks of fun to be had with this adventure and certainly enough to let new players discover the joy of D&D.

If the D&D range carries on the same path, it's going to do very well indeed.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★★★ 8



FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S

DEVELOPER: SCOTT GAMES / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Proving that there is no such thing as a truly unworkable idea, Five Nights At Freddy's approaches horror from a bafflingly weird angle by setting it in a family pizzeria filled with murderous anthropomorphic mascots. Tasked with keeping an eye on the place at night, the player is forced to ensure that the shambling monstrosities do not break into the security office and murder them.

Despite the daft premise,

the game manages to be truly unnerving, with the environment becoming creepier with each passing night. Ever more hints are dropped that nothing is right with the restaurant, with grisly murders plaguing its history. However, all this is presented in such a satirically cheerful style, you're continuously wrong-footed by the scares and never truly adjust to the bizarre nature of the world.

The mechanics are bare-

bones basic, but that's part of the game's charm. With limited power, the player is tasked with keeping an eye on each of the colourful mascots through the CCTV system. So long as the player is looking at them they cannot advance towards the office and can be held back, but the problem is that the mascots quickly learn and adapt. They will soon begin exploiting blind spots in the camera network and even the cameras themselves will begin to fail, running out of juice at the worst possible moment.

With nowhere to run and no way to fight back against these creatures, the player is left relying upon reflexes and careful planning to survive each night, and it's the fascination of managing the resources at hand and learning to adapt your tactics that gives the title its edge.

This said, the game is not without issues. With its relatively short length and narrow focus, there is very little replay value to be found here, and the main gimmick does begin to wear thin in the final couple of hours. Furthermore, despite shifting tactics to keep

players surprised, there are certain locations the mascots will almost always pass through. This means the player can learn to just keep an eye on certain cameras without bothering with others.

Five Nights At Freddy's offers a fresh angle on the horror genre such as we have not seen in a long time, and despite its shortcomings it's well worth the low price. If you're after new scares before Alien: Isolation hits shelves, check this one out.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 8



A wild-haired man is leaning over a network of pipes, studying the valves. In his hand he holds a vial of liquid.



APPOINTMENT WITH F.E.A.R.

AUTHOR: STEVE JACKSON / PUBLISHER: TIN MAN GAMES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tin Man Games have been delighting us so far with their high-tech renditions of an old school idea. The app developer specialises in turning old adventure game books into the sort of thing you can read (and play) on your iPhone, as well as in creating brand new adventure game books for the smartphone market.

So far so good, but for the adaptation of the 1985 classic Fighting Fantasy book Appointment With F.E.A.R. they've changed direction. Tin

Man have done away with all the little reminders that this game was originally a book; the page-turning animation is gone, as are the dice that roll and rattle whenever there is a fight. This makes perfect sense: Appointment With F.E.A.R. is the only Fighting Fantasy novel that is set in a superhero world, and the book feel has been replaced with comic book action. The game is filled with the zap and kapow familiar to fans of such things. Game book text appears in

comic book-style captions and all of this is helped along with a cheesy soundtrack.

The plot has you attempting to foil the nefarious Titanium Cyborg and his cabal of villains who comprise the evil organisation known as F.E.A.R. Your hero is aware that a big meeting of bad guys is going down soon and has to run around Titan City picking up clues and foiling crimes. Character creation is pretty simple; select a set of super powers, a costume and then a name. Names are seemingly randomly generated and they're all ridiculous in one way or another, which adds to the fun.

Appointment With F.E.A.R. is filled with comic book camp and does not take itself at all seriously. Though it sticks to the original book pretty closely, nice touches such as the combat being filled with amusing commentary and little details such as your hero's civilian disguise really stand out.

It's very, very replayable; you'll get through your first game quickly and then find yourself diving in again straight

away. To maximise this, Tin Man have added features like a collectible card system. It's there to encourage players to talk to each other (you can swap cards between players) and also functions as a way of keeping score. It's relatively superfluous and yet, like much of the game, quite addictive.

Overall, this is a great little bit of retro fun and we can't wait to see if Tin Man will continue to use this fun new format in their future games.

ED FORTUNE

★★★★★★★★★ 9



ENDLESS LEGEND IS A 4X TURN-BASED FANTASY STRATEGY GAME BY
THE CREATORS OF ENDLESS SPACE AND DUNGEON OF THE ENDLESS



*"It's a really fun, varied fantasy 4X
with exploration, quests, combat
and all the fun things one expects
from a great 4X."*

SPACEGAMEJUNKIE

*"...a lovely-looking game that is
absolutely dripping with its own
distinctive style."*

USGAMER.NET



COMING SEPTEMBER 2014

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



Alan Cartridge

Hello there! Thanks for coming back, there was a bit of concern that filling this column with nothing but wrestling over the last couple of months might have put some of you off reading this bit ever again. As a reward for your patience we've come up with a mildly amusing headline which is completely unrelated to anything in this issue's column, and we're going to have a look at a big bunch of games to give everyone a chance of finding something to pass the time. On with the nonsense... Ah Ha!

Soul Blazer (SNES, 1992)

First up this month is a quite simply phenomenal RPG-lite from developers Quintet. The first entry in an unofficial trilogy which also includes *Illusion Of Gaia* and *Terranigma* (titles we'll be covering in future issues when we've had a spare few weeks to play through them again), *Soul Blazer* takes an established exploration/dungeon-crawling formula and turns it into something fresh and exciting.

The story is pretty simple - evil spirit Deathtoll has invaded the Freil Empire and imprisoned the souls of its inhabitants in

his monster lairs. An entity known only as The Master sends a hero (you) to the empire, tasked with destroying these lairs and returning the lost souls to reality. Upon defeating each monster lair's set amount of beasts and monsters, the soul of a human, animal, or even a plant or an item is returned to the real world. Leaving the dungeons and heading back to the various villages on the map, you can interact with these newly reincarnated townsfolk to gain quest information or items to help you on your journey.

As players progress through the game, experience points level up your abilities automatically so there are no awkward stats to faff around with. Weapon and armour upgrades are equally simple, involving nothing more than finding better items and equipping them on the menu screen. There are more than a few similarities to the ever-popular *Legend Of Zelda* series, which is possibly the reason why *Soul Blazer* never really took off in the west. For those who aren't too fond of the amount of wandering around in the *Zelda* games though, *Soul Blazer* might be the game you've been looking for. The difficulty isn't too high (apart from some

of the bosses) and the need to liberate souls in order to progress leads to some super-addictive gameplay which makes it really difficult to put down. It'll be 5am before you know it.

Golvellius (Master System, 1988)

Speaking of underrated *Zelda* clones, here's the Master System's version of Nintendo's original 1987 classic. In *Golvellius*, we're sent to a world in the grip of a demon invasion. The King has fallen ill and his daughter has disappeared while searching for a cure, so your task as green-haired youngster Kelesis is to sort the whole mess out.

Killing monsters in the overworld sections will uncover hidden caves, many of which are home to characters who will provide you with useful (or often useless) information. The friendly old hag who supplies you with items is a particular favourite as she turns nasty and throws some particularly cutting insults your way if you decide you aren't interested in what's on offer. It's a bit like being in town on a Friday night. Moving on into the various dungeons and we change to a side-scrolling platform perspective, which in turn leads to a vertically-scrolling shooter mechanic en route to the end of level bosses. The variety of gameplay types bring a welcome change of pace to the game, and while overall it might not be quite as involving as something like *Zelda* it's certainly no less fun.

Spider-Man and The X-Men: Arcade's Revenge (SNES/Mega Drive, 1992)

Out of the many millions of early Spider-Man titles that were released in the early years, this one stands out as a real highlight. Starting off outside an abandoned building, Spider-Man uses his spider sense to find and deactivate a load of bombs that have been placed around the level. It's a fairly simple introduction to a game that probably nobody in the world has finished due to it getting very difficult very quickly...

Having disarmed the bombs and made it into the bowels of the building, Spider-Man discovers his X-Men mates have been kidnapped by Arcade, leading to players taking control of Cyclops, Storm, Wolverine and Gambit trying to free themselves from Arcade's evil Murderworld. Each character has their own uniquely-themed levels which can be tackled in any order, although none of

them are easy so you might as well just start off with whichever character appeals to you the most.

The majority of levels are platform-based, apart from Storm's underwater world which sees you swimming around blowing up generators to raise the water level and eventually make your escape. Wolverine runs around some kind of gigantic toy box, Cyclops is stuck in an underground lair filled with robots and mine carts, and Gambit needs to make his way across some especially deviously designed platforms while killing enemies, avoiding their projectile attacks and trying to outrun a gigantic spiky metal ball all at the same time. There are smaller sub-levels between the main events, and of course each level ends with a boss fight adding to the fun/misery. All in all it's a punishing but enjoyable adventure which any fan of shooty platforming beat 'em ups will find some enjoyment in.

The Legend of the Mystical Ninja (SNES, 1992)

One of only a handful of titles to have been released in the west from the Japanese *Ganbare Goemon* series, *Mystical Ninja* is a massively enjoyable action RPG-ish romp through feudal-era Japan.

The storyline is almost non-existent, boiling down to "some weird stuff is happening, let's go and have a look". In a way, this lends itself perfectly to filling the game with all kinds of wacky enemies, from undercover soldiers masquerading as clowns and mimes in a fairground to cavemen wandering around mountain villages. There's also a friendly army of shapeshifting cats, a lion covered in fire-spewing lanterns, lightning ball-throwing sumo wrestlers, robot ninjas and loads more craziness. Upgrades can be bought from shops using coins dropped by



defeated enemies, each level houses a judo sensei who can teach you special attacks (for a hefty price), and cats (why not?) can be collected to power up your regular attack. A huge amount of sideshow games are also on offer to break things up a bit, ranging from a lottery to a quiz show to brief one-level snippets of *Breakout* and *Gradius*.

Massively colourful and scored with amazing soundtracks, it's a real shame that *Goemon* isn't bigger in the west. *Mystical Ninja 2* and *Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon* on the N64 are well worth adding to your collection, but the "original" *Legend of* is definitely the place to start.

Space Shuttle Project (NES, 1991)

We finish off this month with something completely different - here's that space

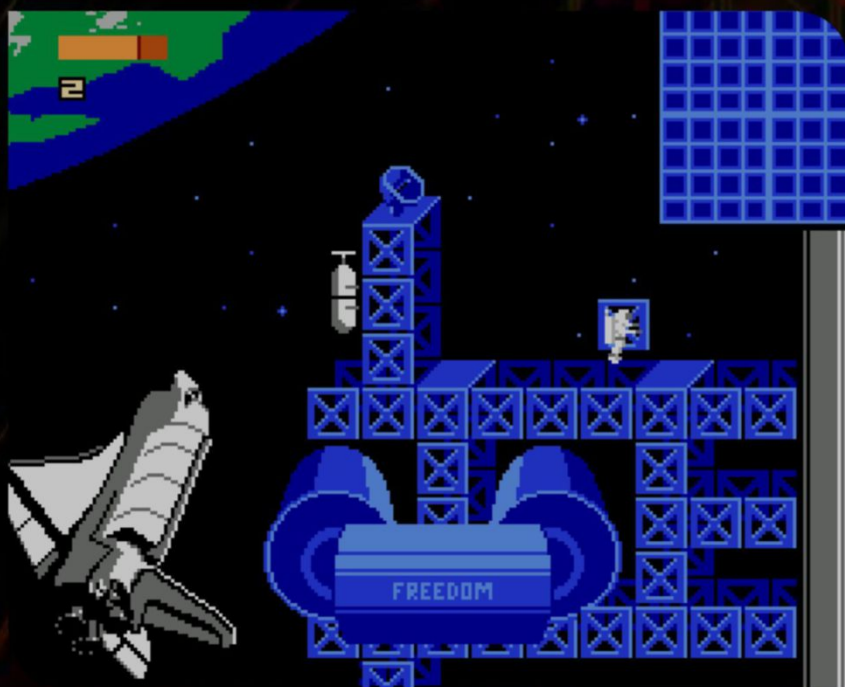
shuttle flight simulator you've always wanted (but never realised)!

First things first, you need to prepare the shuttle. An elevator takes you up to the top of the launchpad where you need to go between platforms to activate a few switches before taking the elevator back down to start loading up on crew members. The catch is that the switches you just pressed also activate some moving ledges that will hamper your ability to use the elevator, and you've got a very strict time limit in which to get everything ready. Even if you manage to do it without any mistakes, there'll usually only be three or four seconds left on the clock. Brutal, but doable when you get the hang of it.

When the shuttle's finally ready, it's time for liftoff! A series of quick time events control the shuttle as you head to your destination, usually involving pressing directions on the control pad to match moving on-screen cursors or pressing a button to stop a line within a marked area. Again you don't get much time to get it right so failure is definitely an option, but persevere until you arrive in space and you'll be treated to a further mission such as repairing a space station or rescuing colleagues who are floating around lost in space. You gain full control over your little spaceman during these missions, flying around the screen avoiding obstacles and replenishing your air supply. When your mission is complete we're treated to another bunch of QTEs and it's back to earth to be heartily congratulated by your commander on a job well done.

It's an incredibly simple game with very little variation, and while it doesn't amount to much more than a series of early quick time events, the novelty of being able to fly your own rocket into space makes this worth investigation.

And that's your lot for this month. No idea what's coming up in the next issue, but join us again in a few weeks and we'll see what ridiculous wastes of time we can uncover for your enjoyment!



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU
THROUGH THE
REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



encourage bidding for property and keeping track of your dice rolls. Land in a space that you can't afford to buy and you end up in a bidding war. Roll doubles three times and you end up in jail. Everyone remembers the rule about buying up all of the properties of one type and building hotels, but very rarely do you find anyone who's willing to make this a game of arguing over paper money. After all, this is a game played with families, and no one wants to argue with Grandma about the cost of Old Kent Road. Which is a real pity, because bidding games can be fun - ask any poker player. (Though you should never play poker with Grandma. She'll win.)

These house rules reduce *Monopoly* into a game of rolling dice and being patient. Because your actions are so dependent on the roll of the dice, there's no real strategy here. It's not even a game about money management; the amount you can earn in *Monopoly* comes down to random chance, so as a lesson in budgeting, really all it's saying is 'spend it all on lottery tickets and hope for the best'. Though the other lesson is that only very unlucky Capitalists ever go to jail - which, sad to say, is true. If you want a game that is genuinely about resource management, saving money and ruthlessly bidding for things, you want to play *Power Grid*, a German game that we'll discuss in some detail another day. It's a sad truth that we don't know about these other games because many of us assume that, because *Monopoly* is boring, all games are.

Monopoly's components are also below par for the industry. It's a genuine pleasure to see the look on someone's face when they discover that other board games have metal coins that feel like pirate gold, big thick boards and painted wooden pieces. Many modern games have beautiful illustrations on each and every card. *Monopoly* has cheap, flimsy bits of card, paper money straight out of a child's play set, and tiny little plastic houses. Indeed the only components of quality are the playing pieces. Let's be honest: if the most fun thing about the game is choosing the playing piece then we have a serious problem. The Hat, the Dog and the rest may look cute and all, but they have no effect on the mechanics of the game. Even in Chess, the starting piece you choose changes gameplay, but in *Monopoly* you're pretty much limited to making tedious gags about irons, top hats and scotty dogs. The most exciting

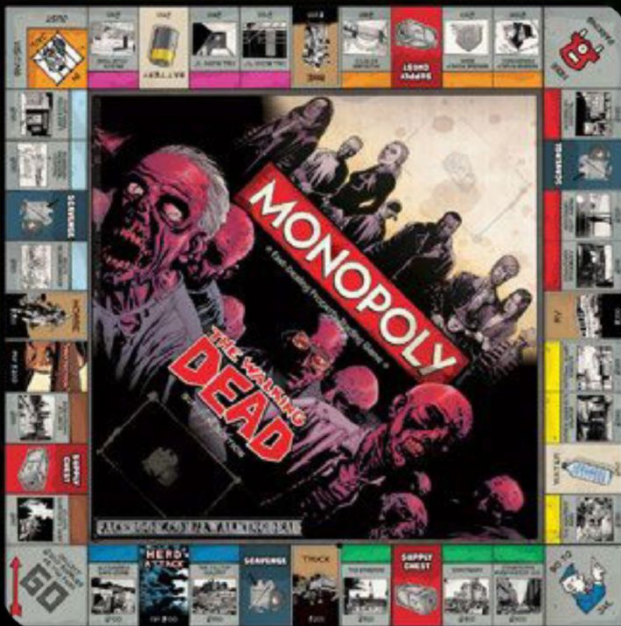
One of the things that frustrates and annoys board gaming enthusiasts is the casual way that many people dismiss our past time. People think that board games are dull, lead to arguments, take too long to play, and are confusing. This is broadly untrue, but the perception is there, and it's because one game has hogged all of the limelight and become the thing that the general public think about when you mention board games. This particular product not only dominates the UK's perceptions of what a game should be, it also has its fingers in multiple franchises, sucking in interest from every possible channel. It's a game you probably own, and it is appropriately named *Monopoly*.

The origins of the game are a bit murky; the popular theory is that its origins come from a realty and taxation game called *The Landlord's Game*, way back in 1906. Its designer, Elizabeth Magie, self-published the thing and originally designed it as social commentary on the outcomes of

land grabbing and greed. The idea was adapted and simplified by a chap called Charles Darrow, who coined the name *Monopoly*. Games publisher Parker Brothers bought the rights for both, though Darrow still gets much of the credit. All this goes to show that even the world's most successful board game owes (in part) its origins to a small, self-published indie game.

The game itself is now ubiquitous; every household has a copy and that's part of the problem. We all know that it's about becoming the richest person in the room, but in fact very few people know the official rules. Indeed, if you aren't a board game geek, have a quick think about the rules for *Monopoly* and how you learned them. There's a good chance that the rules you know aren't the ones in the box, it's more likely you were taught them via a friend or relative and those rules were probably adjusted for one reason or another, either to prevent arguments or to make it shorter.

The actual rules, though quite simple,



rules upgrade the core game had was adding a cat to the mix of available pieces. Sweet that may be, but also something that should tell you that the only reason we play *Monopoly* is because it's never occurred to us to stop and play something better.

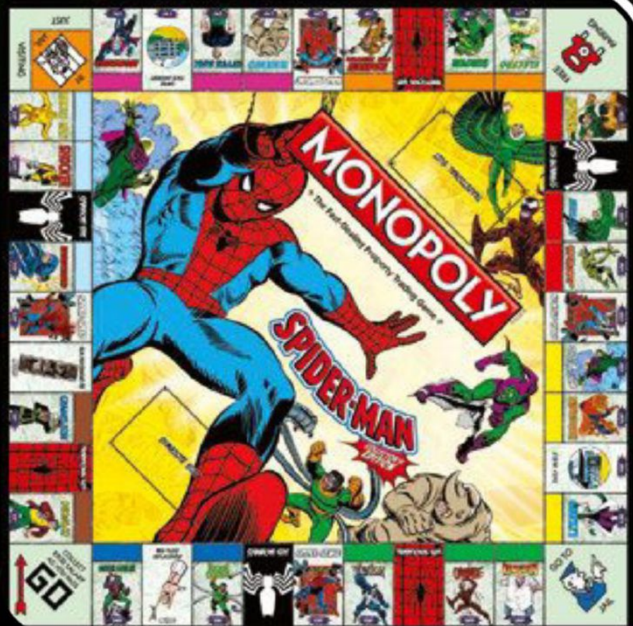
Monopoly has been around so long that's it become part of our collective memories of growing up and something that you end up owning simply because it's a thing that makes a house a home. You have to have a copy, so in order to disguise its lack of depth they've made countless variants. Rarely are the official core rules changed, no one plays them anyway. Instead they swap the money out for something zany or make the counters different. You name a franchise, there's probably a *Monopoly* out there for you: *Simpsons*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, your home town, your favourite sports team, soap operas, TV shows and so on. These days, it's not a game, it's a brand you use to promote other brands.

The most interesting edition would be the version produced by Waddingtons during WWII - it was designed specifically for prisoners of war and could be disassembled to make up an escape kit.

The specially doctored game had sneakily included care packages donated by dummy charities and included a compass, map and money. No other edition has been quite as exciting, alas.

The saddest part is that *Monopoly*'s owners, Hasbro, have some of the best games designers in the world working for it. The company owns Wizards of The Coast, who make that most complicated and imaginative of games, *Dungeons and Dragons*, and the deep and rewarding and *Magic: The Gathering*. Hasbro has worked its magic on other classic board games in the past to great acclaim and rising sales. *Risk* is perhaps the best example; each license has its own rules so *Risk: The Lord of The Rings* is a different game to *Risk: Star Wars*. *Risk Legacy* is considered a modern classic by some. The core game has grown with the audience. But we won't allow *Monopoly* to grow up.

Hasbro has genuinely tried to make *Monopoly* interesting, not just by producing an Elvis edition of the classic game but also by re-thinking and redesigning the thing from the ground up. Faster rules variants, deeper content, more complex components - all have been tried. The problem is that no one

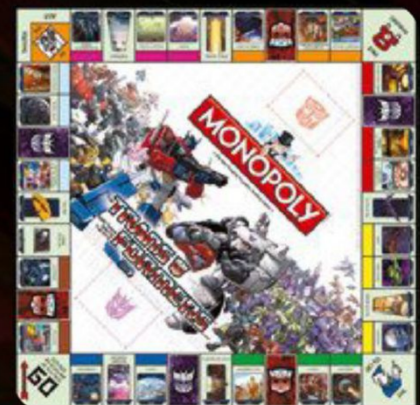
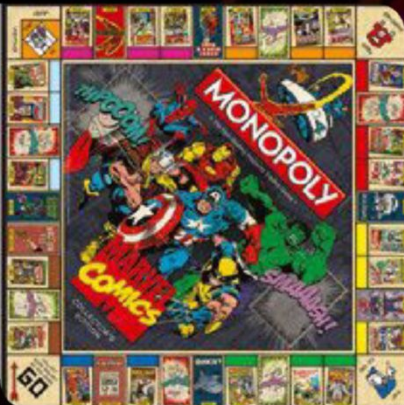


buys these versions. Instead, the game is stuck in a vicious cycle: it exists in the family home because tradition demands that you have to have a board game, but it's only ever played in the most tedious way possible. This ancient artefact of how rubbish board games used to be takes up prime space in the public conscious, ruining it for everyone. If tradition demanded that everyone watch the 1902 film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* several times before watching *Star Wars*, then we'd live in a world without Ewoks, Jedi and X-Wings.

Classic *Monopoly*: the game play is boring, the components are crappy, it's more of an advert than a game these days, no one actually cares about the rules and the public ignore any attempts to make it interesting. Just say no.

Friends don't let friends play bad games - life is too short. The best way to fix this is to start a new tradition: buy a board game for your friends as a house warming gift. *Dobble*, *King of Tokyo*, *Ticket to Ride*, even *Power Grid*. Anything but *Monopoly*.

Ed Fortune can be contacted at ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com and tweeted at @ed_fortune



STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE



2014 has been the year of the convention. Across the UK, there has been some sort of high profile geek related festival going on most weekends and the crowds have descended to join in the fun. So it seems fitting that the world's oldest and most established science fiction convention, Worldcon came to London this year. Called *Loncon 3, The 72nd World Science Fiction Convention*, the event promised to show all the young whippersnapper events exactly how it was done, and it certainly achieved its aim. Vast, varied and very, very well organised Loncon3 proved to be a unique and enlightening experience.

Unlike the more popular one-day pay-on-the-gate style shows common to the UK, Loncon 3 was a 5-day mega event. An estimated 10,000 people descended on London's Excel Centre to enjoy the festivities and the occasion drew in the great and the good from the world of genre across the world. Guests of honour included Chris Foss, Bryan Talbot and Robin Hobb and in addition the likes of Patrick Rothfuss, Steve Jackson, George R.R. Martin and Paul Cornell were also in attendance. The late great Iain M. Banks had been invited to attend prior to his untimely passing last year and his memory was honoured with a series of events and artworks across the convention. Of particular note was an artist's rendition of a Wasp Factory which was breathtakingly disturbing, but not quite as powerful as version of *The Chair* from Bank's seminal work, *Use of Weapons*.

The programme contained over a 1000 separate items; everything from an

interview with Chris Foss to a game of AZAD was available for the keen fan. They were a great many panels, from games design to the future of sci-fi to the production of comic books, pretty much every strata of the nerd world had been covered, the organisers clearly deciding that attendees should never be bored. Representatives from STARBURST were also invited to moderate and participate in several panels and we are happy to report that each individual panel seemed slickly organised with technical issues being quickly attended to when they cropped up. The

organisers had carefully selected their panellists and this lead to some great conversations over the weekend.

To give you an idea of the sheer scale of the event, it was possible to walk from a lecture on cutting edge scientific developments and then turn a corner and then simply find oneself attending a philharmonic orchestra's rendition of famous science fiction theme tunes. One of the highlights was a stage production of Tim Powers' *Anubis Gates*. This was very over-subscribed but the production itself was strong and quite unusual. The same stage also played host to Phil and Kaja Foglio producing yet another episode of their *Girl Genius* radio play. You may think watching a radio show being produced is poor theatre, but Foglio's pulled it off with great daring and aplomb. Another highlight included *The Masquerade*, a slickly produced cosplay event that allowed costumed fans from around the world the chance to show off.

A key feature of the event was the fan village; a market place filled with stalls, each one representing various science fiction societies from around the world. The village was also the place where various bids for future Worldcons were made. Though no one was surprised that Kansas City won the right to host the 2016 event, it is a credit to the longevity of Worldcon that people were campaigning for future events as far ahead as 2025. The fan village also featured various parties and the ever-present games tent meant that there was always something for those who had tired of panels and lectures. Children were also well catered for here, with everything from Chocolate Daleks to Quidditch being available.

The trader's area was pleasingly vast and a second-hand book lovers paradise. The art galleries were brilliantly well organised as were the various authors' signing schedules. This was a great place to meet your heroes in a safe and welcoming environment. Hitch Hikers Guide to The Galaxy fan club zz9.org did particularly well, partially thanks to their very strange two-headed teddy bears called Beeblebears.

One of the central focuses of the entire convention is of course the Hugo Awards. The ceremony was carefully staged and managed whilst still maintaining both a sense of occasion and a touch of anarchic fun. Being an international event means that it isn't always possible for all the nominees to be present. For example double-award winner Kameron Hurley was at Gen Con in the US that weekend, but everyone had briefed their representatives and the acceptance speeches where all very good and heart-warming. The final list of winners is a roll call of some of the most interesting and progressive voices in the Science Fiction and Fantasy community and proof positive that the Hugos are still very relevant. The after-party was reportedly legendary, with the likes of Peter Davison and David Tennant turning up to the Loser's Party. (Doctor Who didn't win anything this year.) Both former Time Lords were presented with special loser's ribbons from George R.R. Martin; who has been no stranger to Hugo disappointment in the past.

This highly successful event will clearly shape the future of SFF fandom in the UK, inspiring others to great heights. With a great number of newer and younger fans joining in to discover that there is more out there than simple one day events, the fandom world is already abuzz with news of the next big event. A good number of UK based attendees are already making plans to attend Worldcon's slightly younger brother, the British National Science Fiction Convention known as Eastercon, which has been running since 1955. Others are cheerfully backing the next two Worldcon bids to come to Europe; Helsinki in 2017 and Dublin in 2019. Time will tell of course, but the future certainly seems very bright indeed for British Science Fiction and Fantasy fans. ✦

WORDS: ED FORTUNE
PHOTOS: ANNE DAVIES

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FUTURE EVENTS VISIT:
Website: www.worldcon.org





INTERVIEW: ROBIN HOBB

WORDS: ED FORTUNE

Robin Hobb is the pen name of Margaret Astrid Lindholm Ogden. She is best known for her bestselling series of fantasy novels set in the land of the Six Duchies. Her latest book, FOOL'S ASSASSIN, features the much-loved character of FitzChivalry Farseer. We caught up with her at Loncon 3 to find out more...

STARBURST: So tell us about Fool's Assassin...

Robin Hobb: Fool's Assassin is the next chapter in the saga of Fitz and the Fool. Chronologically, the events in it happen after the events in the Rain Wilds Chronicles. Some time has passed, both for the reader, and for Fitz and the Fool. So you're going to meet them at a more mature stage in their lives.

What should fans of the previous books expect?

They have been changes in the Six Duchies and in Buck Keep, just like any civilisation. I don't think it's a major spoiler to say that a top-of-the-chain predator has been introduced to the natural environment; which are the dragons. You can't do that in any environment without having it effect things all the way down and time has passed. With war at an end, Buck Keep has grown, the Six Duchies are prospering, the trader has increased, new settlements in the Rain Wilds; there are plenty of things going on which are going to affect Fitz's life in certain ways. Some of us don't deal well with change.

What do you think our fascination is with Dragons?

I had a long conversation about why dragons with John Howe [the illustrator]; I was privileged to meet him in New Zealand. John and I ended up watching the Transformers movie together and I began comparing dragons to Transformers. In this world, some of us have big brothers. And sometimes they're protectors, sometimes they're the ones who torment us, and sometimes they do both at the same time. I read somewhere that the reason we keep pets is that as a species, we're a little bit lonely for another sentient species. Something that we can talk to that doesn't have our baggage; your dog has always got your back. So with dragons we want a big brother; something more powerful than us and we kind of hope that it's somebody wise who will counsel and mentor us. But we may also get the bully who takes our toys away. That's where we get dragons - or Transformers.

Things do frequently get very dark for Fitz. Why do you torture your characters so?

Oh but I don't torture my characters, I really don't. They get themselves into trouble and I do my best to help them out. With this series, there is a set-up fairly early on that the Fool has seen only one future in which Fitz survives. That means that in all the other futures, Fitz perishes. That's something he has to deal with.

The Fool is a very different and interesting character. Where does he come from?

I think that for me, as well as for a lot of other writers I talk to, character generation happens in a part of our minds that we don't have conscious access to. I like to think that all the characters are products of their world but I know as a writer that everything I write is actually a production of the combination of my own experience and things I've read and seen. The Fool stepped out into the spotlight on the stage, and not only did he say, "I'm not a minor character and I'm going to influence events." He's been a challenge to write sometimes because he doesn't always follow the script. Somehow I always end up about where I expected to be by the end of the book but the pathway becomes a little bit convoluted along the way.

What's next after this series?

I have no idea at this point. What happens, not just to me but to many writers, is that you're writing along, happily in your world and then suddenly you get to the point where you realise the next few chapters are going to be hard to write and suddenly this golden book appears on the horizon in your dreams, and it looks so easy to write and it's such a pure storyline you long to abandon this and run off over there. You have to firmly tell yourself, "That's the next book" and I will make notes, think about it, and if I get a piece of dialogue I'll jot it down in a file to save. The sad part is that about half way through you'll say, "Oh look, there's the book on the next horizon." But we keep on writing.

What do you say to someone who wants to be a writer?

Write here, right now. Meaning that we're often told "write what you know". As a teenager, I thought that meant not being able to write about someone climbing mountains because I had never climbed a mountain. What it really means is look at your own life; teenagers alive right now in 2014 know more about being a teenager in 2014 than all my Googling will ever teach me. A teenager right now has a much better ability to write a Young Adult novel that speaks directly to their generation than I would in terms of understanding how their worlds connect. I think if you're a young writer you should not hesitate. Jump in. Do not say, "I am going to write a book" because no one can write a book in an evening. Say I'm going to write a scene or a chapter and those are things that are attainable. Sit down and write it. It may not be perfect but you can always go back and make it better. Capture it now. Final piece of advice; back it up and print it out.



On a Cold Martian Night

by Gareth Preston

Mark didn't know the names of any of the constellations he could be see. He hadn't known them back on Earth, and had made no attempt while stationed on Mars. The red-wine Martian night sky blotted out all but the brightest stars. Still, he gazed up.

Frost was forming on the dark concrete wall which ran the length of the rampart. Mark was glad for the multiple insulating layers in his uniform and gloves. The reality of life on the Red Planet was nothing like the images in the emigration publicity; tanned, cheerful families playing on a Martian beach.

Not in my lifetime, he thought.

His tour of the defences had been uneventful. The Captain had briefed them during the flight that an increase in raids and criminal activity from independents had been reported over the previous few weeks. A show of force was needed, and hopefully some arrests. Above all else Mark and his fellow soldiers hoped for a quiet tour; manning the mighty perimeter walls and gambling some credits in the small but active Freezone. A month had passed with little incident. Boredom had taken hold. The most exciting thing to happen within the last week; a new recruit started with them. A young man called Collins. A thin and sickly looking man.

Mark walked slowly back towards the guard post. Squat and chunky; it crowned one end of the rampart. Collins was in charge of the cannon fixed above it, he could be seen inside the metal globe as it swung steadily back and forth on its servos.

Mirroring the restless feelings of a recruit who had something to prove?

Reaching the heavy steel door, he pressed his gloved right hand against the encoder and waited whilst the suit confirmed his identity to the SENTRI system. The door rolled open.

Inside; the careworn features of Parker regarded him as he unclipped his helmet, removed his gloves and breathed in the dry, warm air. She was sitting at the main console, a wall of monitors behind her, casting her into shadow. Across the screens a steady montage of footage from the many cameras placed along the east side. Yellow polygons expanding and contracting across the pictures as software analysed them for any sign of activity. As Mark walked over to

the dispenser and dialled a coffee he heard the cannon cockpit's hatch open above him, followed by the rhythm of clanking boots-on-ladder that heralded Collins' arrival. Even in his padded uniform the man managed to look rangy, scrawny even. Mark sometimes thought it was unfair to put a soldier that tall inside the sphere. "I've set the cannon back to automatic, sir," he reported.

"Understood, Collins," replied Mark.

SENTRI could target anything faster than us anyway, he thought.

Collins poured himself a glass of water and sat down. The chairs were set in a rough circle in the centre of the main room. Mark was opposite him, checking to see if he had any new messages on his pad. There were none.

"I think the trouble is everyone, technology is about the best it can be. It can always be improved but essentially they think it's always the right idea." Collins' thoughts came out slowly, his dark features frowning in consideration. "Like, technology is just a straight line, but it's not like that is it? Techies make stuff that ain't necessary. They ignore the side effects."

Mark sighed inwardly, that was the downside with quiet tours of duty, too much time to think. He had met more barrack room philosophers than he could count.

Parker was becoming more engaged in the conversation. "You're thinking about screw-ups like the robot infantry, or the Scouring aren't you?"

Collins looked at her, puzzled, "Scouring?"

Parker returned a look of mild admonishment, "The Scouring, y'know? The first attempt at terraforming?"

He shrugged, "Yeah I learnt at school there was like, a false start, or something, before it happened properly."

"A false start?" Mark jumped in. It was a disaster that had fascinated him, "It was humiliating for the whole space industry. The fallout nearly stopped the colonisation programme in its tracks. The white-coats had made all these big claims about how they were going to make Mars into another Eden, all within a generation. They rained down their chemicals and unleashed a sea of nanites across the deserts."

Parker was eager to get in on the telling. "Within a decade, green and blue had spread everywhere, way ahead of predictions. Oceans rising, forests with all kinds of plants and trees. It

was miraculous. You must have seen some of the vids?"

The newest recruit sipped his water. "It is still pretty wild out there, so I hear. And it has been over a hundred years, hasn't it? But I thought terraforming took several hundred years?"

"Yeah we know that now," Mark confirmed. "But back then they thought they'd cracked the code of life. The God Code. Wasn't long before manned missions were being sent. Just scientists at first, then the Aries One. You've heard of them right?"

"The Lost Colony, sir"

Parker injected archly, "Are they lost? Are they really just lost?"

"Let me tell it," Mark said, annoyed at Parker's theatrics. What had happened to those colonists was bad enough without her turning it into a campfire horror story.

"So what happened to them, sir?"

"We don't really know. The terraforming process was unstable. First year; the colony thrived. Then the whole ecosystem began to collapse. Plants and animals mutated, became deformed and withered. Whole continents became deserts again. The weather system became chaotic. Then slowed into a mini ice age. The Aries colony was lost under the ice, and destroyed. By the time they really understood what was going on, it was too late. A real screw-up," Mark said, finishing his coffee.

"Maybe they did understand. Maybe they didn't want to admit their expensive experiment had been a total failure?" Collins said, staring at his water.

"Yeah, bet the government was too cheap to mount a rescue," chimed in Parker.

Red text chattered across one of the screens, beeping quietly. She rotated in her padded seat to take a look, whilst continuing, "Maybe they knew that whoever was left was already past saving. Eating that weird Martian food, getting those nanites in their gut..."

She screwed her face up and visibly shuddered.

Collins looked at her sharply. "What're you saying? Who says they weren't worth rescuing?"

Parker just grunted. "They'd already changed into somethin' else. They weren't human anymore, not really, not like us anyway."

"They'd turned into - Martians? Is that what you think, Parker?"

"Enough, troopers." Mark stepped in and waved them quiet. More red text was appearing on the screens. The response bleeps from the console were shrill to his ears. "What's going on Parker?"

She chewed her lip as she punched up CCTV feeds. All empty streets and walls. "Can't tell yet, sir. We're getting a lot of low level activity on the environment sensors, enough to make SENTRI nervous, but it can't seem to isolate the source. No visuals."

Mark scanned the monitors and tried to make sense of the information. Faint scatters of footfalls, shadowy blurs and moments of pixilation.

"What does the west team report?"

He glanced over at Collins who was standing behind them watching intently. "Still here? Man the cannon Collins! Stay alert but wait for my instructions." Collins nodded and returned briskly to the ladder which led to the pulse cannon's controls.

"They're reporting very similar signals. No sign of raiders or

anyone else out there, just irregular sensor activity."

A decision was needed. Grabbing his rifle and helmet, Mark set out for the door.

"So much for SENTRI, I'm going to take a look. Keep monitoring." With a business-like snap, his helmet was clamped over his head and his visor booted up.

"Sir," acknowledged Parker, switching to infra-red to see if that made a difference. He heard her gasp just before the heavy door pulled back. He didn't need to ask about what, because the doorway was filled by three tall, tattooed figures, solid as sculptures. Cold pain and a sickening sensation spread out quickly from the centre of his chest. Stumbling back, his legs folded beneath him.

The figures strode around him and into the room. He heard Parker shout, followed by the faint whine of a pulse pistol being powered up. The next sound was the thick clunk of a blade biting into armour. He collapsed backward and rolled over, his suit pumping pain-suppressant into his system. He saw Parker wrestling with a

lean whipcord figure, then firing wildly at the three invaders. She struck one, the russet skinned man twitching back, his shoulder fracturing into solid red shards.

Collins was here at last, leaping down from the hatchway, a knife in his hand. Why wasn't he using his rifle? Why was he heading for Parker, drawing back his arm?

No!

Parker fell, choking up blood.

He felt so weak, having lost so much of his own blood, he could only stare upwards, as Collins and an invader loomed above him; a sand-skinned woman. She looked sickly.

"Your machine homes are strong, sir", Collins said sombrely, "but any machine can be understood if you study it long enough." Even as light dimmed from his vision, Mark marvelled at the resemblance between the two faces, now they were side by side. "The stories were true. And, you know, we did not need rescuing. We are so glad you came to join us."



Art: Rylan Cavell

PAUL MOUNT'S



This month we get down and dirty with *THE 100*, euphoric at the finale of *UTOPIA* and we're happy to say hooray for the new *DOCTOR WHO*...

The kids, with whom I am, obviously, completely *down*, seem to be quite partial to a bit of survivalist sci-fi at the moment. You know the sort of stuff: *Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, the upcoming *Maze Runner*. Lots of pretty, pouting girls and boys cut adrift in a hostile environment and fighting against the odds to survive as an unsympathetic regime does all it can to bump them off one by one. Cynical old buggers (who, *moi?*) might recognise certain parallels with just being alive in the modern world; fortunately today's hip cats [*What?! - Ed*] aren't quite as jaded (yet) so they just get off on the adventure, the running, jumping, kissing and... er... getting killed. Hardly surprising that Hollywood's Dream Factory, now much given to regurgitating the same old ideas for slightly different audiences, have taken

the concept and transplanted it wholesale (more or less) into a TV series for The CW Network, home of teens in light fantasy peril. Welcome to *The 100*; it's the end of the world as we know it but there's scarcely a hair out of place...

But I'm being unfair - which really isn't like me at all. *The 100* is actually a pretty decent little show and a palpable hit for The CW in a TV season which saw their revival of *The Tomorrow People* quickly teleported into cancellation and their space-kids-on-Earth drama *Star-Crossed* hastily crossed off most viewers' 'must watch' list. *The 100* is set 97 years after a devastating nuclear conflict has rendered the Earth uninhabitable, its survivors eking out an existence on a network of twelve satellites known as the Ark, in orbit around the presumably-irradiated planet.

But the Ark's resources are dwindling and its life support systems are failing. 100 'expendable' delinquents - most of them pretty and hunky, dammit - are sent down to the surface to check out its viability for supporting human life. Which is where and when the trouble starts...

The 100 is a grittier show than we might be used to from The CW. Life is tough down on Earth but the planet isn't as ravaged as the survivors have been led to believe. In truth, it all looks a bit like a forest in Vancouver; there's lots of mud and rain and big trees. Some of the local fauna's been mutated by radiation and there seem to be nasty things lurking in the water. Worse, though, for the 100 are the unanticipated human survivors; known as 'grounders', they're hostile and ruthless and dangerous and they really don't want stray young spacemen and women wandering about ruining their post-apoc idyll. Back up on the Ark things aren't much better; restless adults are rebelling against the controlling elite who have been keeping secret the fact that the Ark can't sustain its 2000 inhabitants and that it doesn't have the ability to transport everyone down to the surface if the planet proves habitable.

It's this contrast between the exploits of the kids down on Earth and the adults on the Ark which makes *The 100* a bit beefier than much of The CW's generally youth-oriented output. The going's tough for the 100, but life's no picnic on the Ark either. In amongst all the usual love triangles and hormonal jealousies - Clarke (Eliza Taylor) is attracted to fellow 100er (does that work?) Finn (Thomas McDonnell) whose girlfriend Raven (Lindsey Morgan) travels down from the Ark and cuts short the couple's burgeoning lovey-doveyness - there's unusually brutal violence. One character is subject to a nasty hanging in episode four (although you'd be hard-pressed to tell from the clumsily-edited version shown on E4 in the UK which omits the quite graphic sequence I saw in an episode preview a few months back) and an eight



STARBURST



year-old girl commits suicide. Elsewhere there are stabbings, spearings, and torture (also clearly subject to the snip of the E4 censor) and a general sense that life really is nasty, brutish and potentially very short on this reborn planet Earth.

Back on the Ark - a mixture of lens-flared control rooms and grimy, clanking metallic stairwells and corridors - there's an almost **Babylon 5** vibe (minus the daft-haired aliens) as the adults plot and counterplot, and tensions spiral out of control as the 100 drift in and out of contact with their artificial home. Episode nine kicks off with a savage act of terrorism as a celebratory event aboard the Ark is interrupted by a bomb-blast which either vaporises or fatally wounds a number of the ship's crew. The show manages to create a real 'ticking clock' tension in the dilemmas both of the 100 and those back on the Ark who are depending on the success of their reconnaissance mission down on Earth. The constant switchback of the narrative from Earth to Ark helps the show avoid the pure 'teen appeal' trap it could so easily have fallen into.

The 100 won't reinvent the TV sci-fi wheel but it's not supposed to. It is, however, a show which is keen to constantly surprise its audience and its combination of gleaming teens, clinical spaceship drama and gritty violence and pacy action makes it a refreshing change from the usual bland, anodyne well-scrubbed fantasy dramas aimed at the teenage demographic. If you can set aside any entirely-justified prejudices you might have towards teen sci-fi, **The 100's** seriously worth your time and your consideration. I'm 100% positive you'll enjoy **The 100**. Well, maybe 90%...

UTOPIA

Channel 4's fantastically imaginative and disturbing **Utopia** (see last issue) didn't disappoint as it delivered its two final and potentially-devastating episodes. The stakes could scarcely have been higher with the Network's eugenics programme

about to be put into action by the release of an incurable flu virus. Events come to a heart-stopping head out in the bleak, wintry countryside as the whole plot unravels, home truths are revealed and core characters get shot. The final episode includes a desperate race against time to track down the sleeper agent tasked with unleashing the virus. There's inevitably more blood-splattering gunplay (**Utopia** seems obsessed with guns and the effects of shooting people in the head - it's not pretty) and an edge-of-the-seat conclusion which reopens the entire story and sets up a potential third series after a succession of stunning cliff-hangers and false endings.

Whether we'll actually get that third series depends on how important it is to cookery/home improvement/grubby reality show-obsessed Channel Four to broadcast innovative prestige modern dramas. Viewing figures for Series Two have been poor and in these straitened TV times C4 might not be able to justify releasing the funds necessary to make an arty, expensive

drama which no one's actually watching. And in truth, although a third series is possible, it's hard to see where the show can go without repeating itself. I'm keen to find out what happens to Ian, Becky, Wilson Wilson and all the rest - but it'd be a crushing disappointment if we get the same core storyline regurgitated when, to all intents and purposes, Series Two has wrapped it all up and put it to bed.

So if that's it for **Utopia** - loose ends notwithstanding - I'm one happy TV Zoner. Across two series it's been compelling, difficult, ugly, brutal and, above all else, utterly brilliant. At the end of the day what more can we ask of our telly?

DOCTOR WHO

On the evidence of the first four episodes of the new series of **Doctor Who** - the first starring new-man-in-TARDIS Peter Capaldi - in case you'd missed the news - a significant corner has been turned in the show's contemporary fortunes. Regular readers of this column will recall





that I was not much enamoured of the Matt Smith era. It seemed to me (and other opinions are available, Whovians!) that showrunner Steven Moffat had completely lost sight of **Doctor Who's** core strengths and values as he concentrated on his vision of the show as a 'fairytale' starring a 'madman in a box.' My own view, for what it's worth, has always been that the Doctor is the one person who palpably *isn't* mad in a Universe full of lunatics and monsters but you can take that one away and think about it for a bit if you like.

All change though - and for the much, much better - as the Capaldi era kicks into action and banishes miserable memories of 'lovely' Matt Smith episodes and knockabout comedy hijinks. Capaldi's brusque, brittle and

dismissive new Doctor is an absolute joy and, thankfully, the show's writing has tightened up to accommodate an actor of his experience and ability. His debut episode, the feature-length *Deep Breath* could have done with some pruning and tightening-up but when it shone it shone like the sun, especially in a number of long, dialogue-driven sequences which really allowed Capaldi to set out his stall and, thankfully, his co-star Jenna Coleman (whose Clara was shamefully underwritten in Series Seven) to flex her own acting chops. Phil Ford and Moffat's glorious and spectacular *Into the Dalek* restored Skaro's metal meanies to the status of 'utter bastards' they've lost in their last few appearances where they've been little more than 'knock-me-down' skittles. Viewers potentially unsure of

Capaldi's cold, caustic interpretation of the Doctor must surely have been won over by Mark Gatiss's brilliantly witty *Robot of Sherwood* where the show finally remembered how to be funny (and exciting) without trying to be a gag-heavy sitcom. *Listen* veered dangerously back towards Moffat's default 'scariest thing in the Universe' obsession with its story of 'things under the bed' (which he's already mined in 2006's *Girl in the Fireplace*); in the end its typically time-bending storyline and its betrayal of its original spooky concept (a generation of children will now be petrified of bedspreeds for life) was redeemed by another measured and mesmeric performance from the effortlessly-charismatic Capaldi.

So there it is. I'm back in the fold and **Doctor Who's** back in my good books. BBC Wales will be so relieved. Whether the general audience will be quite so accepting remains to be seen; Capaldi's something of a culture shock after the puppy dog charm of David Tennant and the manic hyperactivity of Matt Smith. Capaldi is cast very much in the mould of 'classic' Doctors (not least in his Pertwee-esque choice of costume) but his debut series (he's confirmed for a second) has got off to the strongest start in years with a quartet of rewatchable, wonderfully-made stories driven by an actor delivering what could yet be the definitive take on one of Britain's great modern folk heroes. If Moffat can continue to reign in his tendency towards needless over-complication and just deliver a set of clever, rip-roaring, genre-hopping adventures, this new era could turn out to be (wait for it...) the trip of a lifetime. More on **Who** next month... *vwrap... vwrap...*



Contact me via the magic of email at paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thing - @PMount



it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE

Long-time readers will be aware of my on-going search for interactive horror experiences; a personal crusade that began way back in the early nineties, when I first attended the fully licensed **Alien War** experience in Glasgow. This was a great piece of interactive theatre that quickly moved on up to the big time at the Trocadero Centre in London, before falling victim to an unfortunate flood. A similar obsession of mine has been the quest for VR (or Virtual Reality if you want the lengthier vernacular). Unlike the patchy evolution of live interaction within the fantasy genre, I am actually beginning to believe that VR is finally here in the form that some of us have dreamed of since first seeing it on **Tomorrow's World**, back when American TV was still a bit rubbish!

VR was always going to appeal to sci-fi and horror fans, due to the ability (once the tech was available) to produce the experience of actually being in a fantasy environment for real. The mix of fantasy and gaming was always going to culminate in VR. To me this was a foregone conclusion, and whilst some of you had forgotten all about the possibilities it could one day open up, I always *knew* that one day I would be blasting TIE fighters for real with a stupid helmet on my head that actually worked!

The main thrust of achieving a working virtual environment began back in 1985 when Jaron Lanier and Thomas Zimmerman ditched Atari to form **VPL Research**. It was these guys that produced the first working prototype and established the holy trinity of software, headset, and input device (in this case a sensory glove). It is a formula that stuck even though in the eighties the tech available could never live up to the lofty aspirations of the concept. The bankruptcy of VPL was almost pre-ordained five years later in 1990. Then came **Virtuality**, a company formed by Jonathan Waldern which constructed actual arcade units for us

all to play on. These were the units that popped up at Thorpe Park, and more noticeably, the Trocadero in London. I



The Investment opportunity of 2015 - Rift Addiction Clinics!

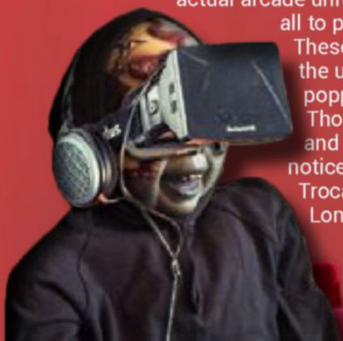
realise that you probably think I lived there during the early nineties, but the place really attracted the weird and wonderful in terms of businesses, exhibitions and technology back then. The Troc was a Tech Mecca. Hell, it even had **Sega World** as a key tenant for six years until 1996. It's gone forever now, destined to be a 500-room *pod* hotel.

Like 3D before it, VR has suffered a reality gap. 3D might have been all the rage for a few years back in the mid-fifties, but technology would not enable it to properly enter the public zeitgeist for more than fifty years. At least the path seems shorter for VR, with only 22 years from rage phase to public acceptance. 1992 was the rage phase for VR. It was being discussed as though widespread adoption of the tech was imminent. **STARBURST** was on the bandwagon too with the bloody dreary **The Lawnmower Man** plastered all over the cover of issue 166. (I must remember to ask Alan Jones whether he still stands by his generous 6 out of 10 rating!). Although the far superior **Brainstorm** was the first movie to feature VR, **The Lawnmower Man** was the first to champion the aesthetic, and helped to form people's preconceptions about what a VR world would actually look like.

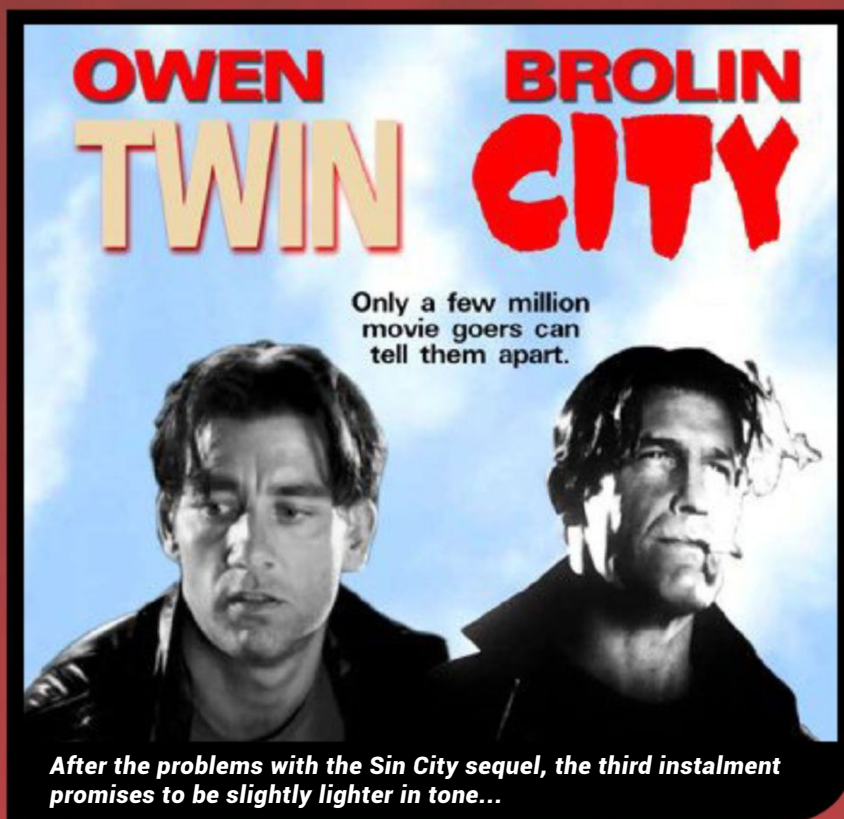
Back in the 1992 real world I managed to experience a few of the early **Virtuality** VR units at the Troc. They were as inelegant as they were malfunctioning. You had to sit in a pod unit the size of a small car, and wear a visette head display unit that weighed in at a whopping 645 grams. Whilst you could play primitive

D&D via **Legend Quest**, or take to the skies with the Red Baron in **Flying Aces**, I opted for an 8-man tank battle. It was hideous! You were placed in a world of flat polygons that the ZX Spectrum had transcended over a decade earlier, and the response time was so slow that your head movement merely guided where the screen would go some time later in the day. Yet we were all strangely excited - like being at a gig by a dreadful band that you knew would later evolve into Nirvana. Irrespective of the tech difficulties, the sheer cost of nearly £30,000 per unit pretty much guaranteed their failure to penetrate a wider audience, and VR joined 3D in the tech waiting room where it would remain for over two decades...

I first heard of the **Oculus Rift** in 2012, and tried not to get overly enthusiastic. It was a VR headset designed by Palmer Luckey of the University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies. He was a VR nut who never gave up, and his Luckey break (sorry) came when the ascendancy of the smartphone lead to a mass production of cheap components that perfectly suited VR, allowing the production of a high tech, low cost headset to become a reality. From a legendary public demo at the E3 trade show in 2012, his **Oculus Rift** then went on to raise \$2.5 million via a Kickstarter campaign that had only originally whipped out a begging bowl for a paltry \$250,000. My first Rift experience was to come shortly after. Our tech guru Jim Boon had one hooked up to his PC when I was at his offices going over the **STARBURST** website. I promptly joined the legion of Rift Coaster "victims", as within minutes I nearly fell through his



Zombaby is excited! Once the Rift goes on sale he can watch millions of us turn into zombies...



So we are one month on from our coverage of **Sin City: A Dame to Kill For** in issue 404, and the movie has gone down in flames as one of the biggest box office failures of ANY sequel. At the time of writing the film has only recouped 10% of its budget – so what on earth went wrong? Personally I did enjoy the film, and whilst there are negative reviews out there, nothing is scathing enough to explain this two tone debacle. I thought it still looked great, but it just didn't quite feel right. I found it lacked the impact of the original, and the stories were just not as engrossing. It had an air of illegitimacy even though the cast had mostly returned and were mostly great. Powers Booth made a great reprisal of his evil Senator Roark, and it was nice to see Bruce Willis, Mickey Rourke and Jessica Alba all back. And although originally being a shoo-in for Angelina Jolie, I just cannot imagine anyone pulling off the titular (in more ways than one) bad girl better than Eva Green.

Structurally the composition of part prequel, part sequel was sound enough. It certainly suited the interlinked anthology narrative. Did I have any major problems with it? Yeah, I think that featuring Josh Brolin as the Dwight character was only a smart move if he at least *tried* to adopt some of Clive Owen's mannerisms in the role (which he didn't). To then have him try to play the part post-plastic surgery, *and* try to look like Clive Owen is an insane decision that damaged the movie – pure and simple! Strangely enough only Joseph Gordon-Levitt in **Looper** has ever looked worse than this in makeup. I have to question the competence of everyone involved in that decision. Either get Owen back for an afternoon or rewrite the damn thing. Have him leave the face bandages on! Anything is preferable to this. Seriously, that Clive Owen wig takes your breath away when you first see it!

So why has this all ended up so Sin Shitty? Well my personal opinion is that they simply pissed about way too long in making this. This was not the **Star Wars** franchise, it was an unexpected, left field hit. The **Sin City** brand was simply not established long enough in the pop cultural zeitgeist to leave it this long. It's no wonder Robert Rodriguez was getting miffed with the Weinsteins as long as five years ago about the delays. He could probably see that the sequel was needed to help cement the fanbase. Certainly the last minute rebranding as **Sin City 2** in the UK suggests the studio wised up to these problems at the eleventh hour. As it stands, a 9-year wait to deliver a shonky wig has probably closed the borders for any return visit to Basin City. ✦

Jordan Royce can be contacted at jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com and co-hosts the Starburst Radio Show with Assistant Editor Kris Heys, Wednesday 9pm until 11pm GMT on Fab Radio International – www.fabradiointernational.com also available from iTunes as a Podcast

window in the real world as I experienced the feeling of being stood upright on a roller coaster, about 300 feet in the air. Compared to the VR of my youth the Rift was simply breathtaking. Perfect response, with only a slight lack of resolution preventing a feeling of total immersion.

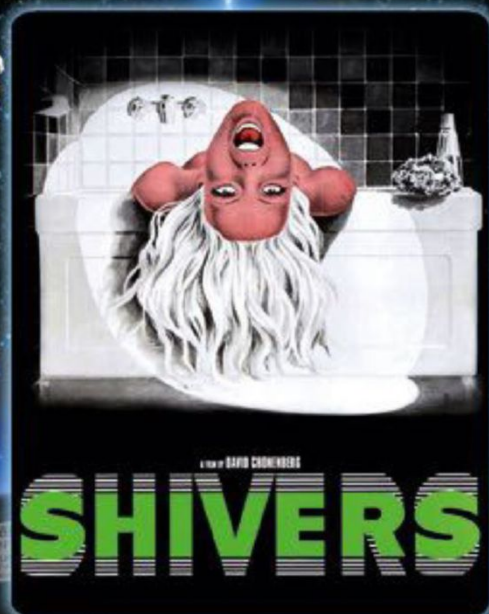
Christmas came and happily I acquired my own Rift, and began working my way through the available demos. Developers demos were available free and in abundance, but actual games were thin on the ground as it appeared that most developers were waiting for the HD version due out right now! The first Rift (DK1) was definitely a showcase item that most geeks were using to blow the minds of their friends and family. The clever uses for the Rift were impressive, ranging from journeys through space, to being in a scene from a horror movie. My favourite was **VR Cinema 3D**, which allowed you to pop a video file onto your PC then watch it in an empty cinema, in whatever seat you wanted. No knobheads, smartphones, talking, or eating, and no need for me to deal out justice with my toffee hammer!

Literally two weeks after I got my own Rift, my initial optimism was further cemented when Facebook bought the whole shebang for a whopping \$2 billion. Things were happening fast, and now even the resolution problem has just been decisively dealt with. The updated "Crystal Cove" version of the Rift (or the Rift HD to us ludites!), has literally just been released, and it has several huge games offering support, most notably **Elite Dangerous**, which has made the Rift a part of its 'in

game' controls. I opted for an upgrade kit called RiftUP! which boosts the DK1 to the HD version. It was an absolute nightmare to setup but finally I got to try out **Elite Dangerous** on the Oculus Rift HD. For me this was the moment I was hoping for way back in 1992. I put on the headset and was instantly sat in a starfighter cockpit. **Elite Dangerous** is still only in beta testing but the game itself is a huge achievement. Like the original **Elite** game 30 years ago it presents you with a universe in which to explore, trade, and ultimately fight within. As a game it's impressive, attached to the Rift it's downright life stealing. After just staring for ages at the cockpit and messing about with the controls, I was off on my first dogfight in demo mode. I might not have been taking on TIE fighters but this was the breakthrough moment in gaming for me. Everything is perfectly responsive and the resolution is spot on. When the enemy craft flies off screen you can actually just look up through the cockpit window and follow their vapour trail. Finally your own sensory intuition can influence the experience of gaming. I have no qualms in advising that you get an Oculus Rift HD (DK2), and get on **Elite Dangerous**. It's the real deal, and we haven't even begun to see what else is in store for it. I did also have a mess about on **Affected** (a sort of 3D haunted house experience). This opened my mind to even wider uses, as it literally made me jump out of my bloody skin! The Oculus Rift is nothing short of a literal and metaphorical game changer. For fans of genre the future developments for the device could bring the very fabric of our outlandish hobby to life in our living rooms...



OUT OF THIS WORLD RELEASES FROM ARROW VIDEO



SHOP DIRECT FROM THE ARROW STORE AND EARN REWARD POINTS TO BE USED ON FUTURE PURCHASES!*

WWW.ARROWFILMS.CO.UK/SHOP

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION ON FORTHCOMING RELEASES VISIT:



*For every £1 you spend per item, we'll give you 10 reward points. 10 reward points = 10 pence. Reward points can be used at any time against future purchases.

A promotional poster for the TV show 'The Incredible Hulk'. The Hulk character is shown from the chest up, with a menacing expression and glowing red eyes. He is holding a piece of torn paper at the bottom of the frame. The background is dark and textured, resembling a cracked wall.

SEE RED
GO GREEN

**THE
INCREDIBLE
HULK**

WEEKDAYS 6:20pm

horrorchannel

SKY 319 FREESAT 138 VIRGIN MEDIA 149 TALKTALK 487

horrorchannel.co.uk

THE WORLD'S LONGEST RUNNING MAGAZINE OF CULT ENTERTAINMENT

STARBURST

